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WOMAN'S WIT

OR,

LOVE'S DISGUISES.

A Play,

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES,

AUTHOR OF "VIRGINIUS," "THE HUNCHBACK," &c.

LONDON:
EDWARD MOXON, DOVER STREET.
MDCCCXXXVIII.

LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS TO THE QUEEN,
WHITEFRIARS.

GIFT

754

TO

SAMUEL ROGERS.

This Play

IS

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

ANXIOUS to promote, to the utmost of my humble ability, an honourable and chivalrous speculation, this play was promised to my friend, Mr. Macready, six months ago, and ought to have been ready last February. Repeated attacks of severe indisposition prevented me from completing it until my return to town, about the middle of April. If it is favourably received,—to the indefatigable and masterly superintendence, to the unstinting liberality, of the present enthusiastic and enterprising Lessee of the Theatre Royal Covent Garden, it will be indebted for no inconsiderable portion of its success.

London, May 21st, 1838.

CHARACTERS.

Lord Athunree	Mr. Warde.
Sir Valentine de Grey	Mr. Anderson.
Sir William Sutton	Mr. Bartley.
Walsingham	Mr. Macready.
Bradford	Mr. Waldron.
Felton	Mr. Pritchard.
Monsieur de l'Epee	Mr. Tilbury.
Clever	Mr. Harley.
Lewson	Mr. Diddear.
Sir William Sutton's Servant	Mr. Holmes.
Sir Valentine's Servant	Mr. Collet.
Officer	Mr. C. J. Smith.
Eustace	Miss Taylor.
Hero	Miss H. Faucit.
Emily	Mrs. Serle.

WOMAN'S WIT;

OR,

Love's Disguises.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Sir William Sutton's House.—An Ante-room leading to a Ball-room.—Music as of a Ball.—Dancers seen in the further Apartment.—Visitors passing in and out.

Enter from the Ball-room, WALSINGHAM *and* BRADFORD.

WALSINGHAM.

FAIR revels these Sir William Sutton holds,
And all in honour of the city maid!
Sure the whole town is here, such swarms pass in
And out. Is it a match, as they report,
Betwixt the maid and brave Sir Valentine?

BRADFORD.

In prospect, Sir; but yet I question much,
If in a year hence, nearer than to-day.
She of the spirit of conquest is possess'd
Incontinently: victory but serves

To whet the lust of triumph. Strange so long
Lord Athunree did occupy her: but
His station ceased, soon as Sir Valentine
Aspir'd to fill his place. A grief it is,
A maid with treasure past compare like her's
Of gorgeous beauty, with a mine of wealth,
Should use her riches with such huswif'ry,
As makes one pity her possession of them!

WALSINGHAM.

Lo you, she dances, and, for partner, takes
Lord Athunree, and not Sir Valentine.
A novel measure that! know you its name?

BRADFORD.

No—ay!—a liberal measure!—See!—his hand
Doth hold possession of her waist; while her's,
Nothing repelling, on his shoulder rests,
Permitting neighbourhood so close, embrace
Were scarce in privilege a jot behind.

WALSINGHAM.

You know Lord Athunree?—his character?
The limits of my acquaintance.

BRADFORD.

No, Sir.

WALSINGHAM.

Sir,
He is a libertine. He hath been much
Abroad. That dance, I will be bound, is ware
Of his importing. Yes; a libertine!
A man of pleasure—in the animal
Ignoble sense of the term—that owns no curb
Of honour, generosity, or ruth;

Nor hath a single grace, except the nerve—
A contradiction which would make one question
That valour is of itself a thing to boast of—
To vouch the wrong he does, and stand by it!

BRADFORD.

You say this feelingly.

WALSINGHAM.

Because I feel it.
I had a friend, whose heart could scarce lodge weal
Or woe, without the privity of mine—
A friend of quick affections—and a villain
Compassed the ruin of the maid he loved.
That villain was the lord, who dances there.
They fought—thro' odds in skill, the honest arm
Was mastered by the foul; but vengeance, tho'
'Tis baffled, is not lost! Good morning, for
More than an hour or twain, 'tis past the turn
Of night.—Free thanks for your free converse with
A stranger.

BRADFORD.

Sir, the like I render you:
But will you not delay some moments more?
In spirit, yet the revels are but young!

WALSINGHAM.

Sir, I am pall'd with them—and were I not,
That lord approaches, and the sight of him
Would put out keenest zest of joyance.

BRADFORD.

Have with you, then; far as our road is one,
We'll go together.

WALSINGHAM.

Sir, right willingly! [*They go out.*

Enter LORD ATHUNREE *and* FELTON.

LORD ATHUNREE.

'Tis not for him, by sheer effrontery,
For two years I have held the foremost place
'Mongst swarms of lovers close besieging her!
Made one and all to stand aloof, whene'er
I thought they press'd too near!

FELTON.

I have marvell'd oft
At your success.

LORD ATHUNREE.

Of blood-letting, you know,
In the high mode, I have as little fear,
As need of fear; and would they come to that,
I soon convinced them, that I knew their art
Better than they did.

FELTON.

To say the truth, the foil
Has stood you much in stead, when there was need
Of weapon of graver practice.—Found you ever
Your equal in the fence?

LORD ATHUNREE.

Ay; and my master!
And therein do I tax my lucky stars,
That watch not o'er me now. He is here in the house,
That gentleman from travel late arrived,
Who, with the gloss of the fair countries which
He has been seeing, shines, and quite puts out
All light of homely worth.

FELTON.

Sir Valentine?

LORD ATHUNREE.

The same;
That knight of France, tho' son of England. Ay,
And would be captain too, to Venus, Sir!
Would take the fortress, all who'd carry which,
I at impracticable distance still
Have kept—yet come no nearer than I was
To winning it, when first set down before it.

FELTON.

Fear'st thou surrender then to him?

LORD ATHUNREE.

Humph! Fear?
That "fear" 's an ugly word! "Do I fear?" He is quick!
His point and eye do go together! Scarce
You are mark'd, you are hit! his sword is part of him,
Grows to his hand, Sir, as his hand to his wrist;
The very moment that your weapons touch,
He is here, and there, and in!—his lounge, a shot
You see not till 'tis home! We quarrell'd once,
And twice I felt him, ere a man could say
That he was well *en garde*—but touches, yet
Forerunners sure of heavier payment—so
I gave the battle up!—Yes, I do fear—
Save I have hit him, as I think I have,
Where useless lounge or parry!

FELTON.

Hit him! How?

LORD ATHUNREE.

I' the brain and heart, Sir, without damage of
The skin! Thro' the eyes, Sir, that take hit and hit

And ne'er the worse, howe'er the practice tells
Within! He is a man of sentiment!
Sentiment, mark you! that is, flesh and blood
I' the summer cool as spring—or water, Sir,
At the boiling point without a bubble—or wood
Without ignition in the heart of fire!
An ample span of forehead!—Mark!—a full
And liquid eye—free nostrils—crimson lips,
Cushioning one another without stint
Of the velvet—and a chin could show a copse
Of beard—a man, Sir, with all these, and yet
With wishes innocent as thoughts of babes!
A lie, Sir, on the face of it!—yet such
He passes for unto himself—believes
Indeed he is, and doth of others judge
But thro' the colour of this self-delusion—
Particularly women. He would have them
Earth to himself—to all else, things of Heaven!
Impassive to impression, as the air
Which man ne'er yet gave form or colour to!

FELTON.

Well?

LORD ATHUNREE.

I did dance with her just now.

FELTON.

Fair Hero?

LORD ATHUNREE.

Yes; I did dance with her a free
And liberal dance—the dance of contact, else
Forbid—abandoning to the free hand
The sacred waist! while face to face, till breath
Doth kiss with breath, and eye embraceth eye.

Your transed coil relaxing, straight'ning, round
And round in wavy measure, you entwine
Circle with circle, till the swimming brain
And panting heart in swoony lapse give o'er!

FELTON.

I know; that foreign dance thou didst bring home.

LORD ATHUNREE.

The very same; I taught it her, and first
Did dance with her to-night.

FELTON.

I had admir'd
To see you.

LORD ATHUNREE.

Had you not, I had admir'd
The card-room kept you. Give you joy—you won!
But to the dance. The evening half was out
And still he held her ear.

FELTON.

Sir Valentine?

LORD ATHUNREE.

Who else? who else that seat pre-eminent
By her fair side had held in spite of me.
I watch'd for my occasion, and it came;
Some friend did crave a moment's audience; ere
'Twas done, her waist was in my custody;
Her white arm hanging from my shoulder, where
Her hand did freely couch. "Your game goes well!"
I whisper'd her; "Play boldly, and 'tis your's:
The measure this to set the outline off!
Give sway to thy rich figure! Abandon thee
To the spirit of the dance! Let it possess thee!

Float thee as air were footing for thee! stud
Thy cheeks with smiles of fire, and give thine eye
The lightning's dazzling play! fix them on mine,
That each do feed the other's, like to tongues
With converse waking converse!"

FELTON.

Well?—I see
Thy drift!

LORD ATHUNREE.

Thou should'st have seen the issue on't—
While, like a pupil at a task he loves,
Whose aptitude with eager will outstrips
His master's bidding, she was twenty times
The thing I wished her! How she rose and sank
With springy instep, while her yielding waist—
Well as her waving neck, her beauteous head—
Did show her fair and falling shoulders off!
A world she look'd and moved of passionate
Quick sense—of loveliness and joyousness—
And I, be sure, did show its reigning lord!
Nor with the measure did dominion cease;
But when her drooping lids, relaxed steps,
Disparted lips, and colour vanishing,
Gave note she must give o'er—her languid form,
Close girdled by my arm, her hand in mine,
Her cheek for pillow on my shoulder laid,
I led her to a couch, where courtesy
Of course admitted tendance!

FELTON.

What of him?

LORD ATHUNREE.

He is mad! When he did turn, and note us first,

He looked as one who questioned his own eyes;
Then stood awhile, no doubt admiring how
Step did keep time with step, and how we mov'd
In closest neighbourhood, disparting but
To meet—her arm, a link ne'er letting go!
Then with a start of sudden fury went,
And cast him on a seat with folded arms,
And knitted brows scanning us, as he wish'd
His eyes could do the office of the lightning.
I car'd to mark no more—I saw the storm
I wish'd would come was on; and knew 't would hold!

FELTON.

And does it?

LORD ATHUNREE.

Yes; thrice she advances made—
As women know to make, and not to seem,
Except to practis'd eyes—to draw his notice:
Dropp'd her glove near him—wish'd she had a chair,
And one at his hand—complain'd of thirst, and just
A salver brought to him with wine—and all
In vain. Right in his eyes display'd her form
In attitude of tender languishment—
And to no more account than offerings
Of gems before an idol made of stone!
But see; we have danc'd out the night; and day,
With fresh and flushy vigour, cometh on;
You hear the rout breaks up. Attend him home,
Obtain his ear; know nothing, but be sure
Of slightest opportunity he gives
For her disparagement to take advantage.
Here comes the Queen of the night, and all forlorn,
As she had lost her throne!

Enter HERO, *leaning upon* EMILY.

EMILY.

What miss you, Hero,
That thus you pause and turn; go on again,
And pause and turn again? Fear'st any thing
Thou hast forgot?

HERO.

No! I have danc'd too much
To-night. The night before it was the same!
No rest—all revels!—Madness, with a frame
That is any thing but iron. [*Turns to look back.*

EMILY.

There again!
I am sure there's something you do miss—What is it?

HERO.

My spirits only! Are not your's nigh wasted?
[*Turns again.*

LORD ATHUNREE. [*Aside to* FELTON.

She waits for him—he saw her home last night.
My life on't she must look for other squire.

EMILY.

Come.

HERO.

Are they dancing yet?

EMILY.

What do you hear,
To make you ask? You're dreaming! Saw you not
That the musicians left the room before us,
And scarce a dozen laggers did remain
Besides ourselves?

HERO.

I know not what I saw,
I am tir'd—heart-tir'd—too tir'd to move or rest—
A weariness, won't let me go or stay !

LORD ATHUNREE.

He comes—accost him—ask him of the ball.

Enter SIR VALENTINE.

FELTON.

See I Sir Valentine the last of all
The revellers ?

SIR VALENTINE.

You see him, Sir ; 'tis e'en
Sir Valentine.

FELTON.

Lik'd you the ball to-night ?

SIR VALENTINE.

Yes !—No !

FELTON.

What ! Lik'd it, and dislik'd it ?

SIR VALENTINE.

Yes !

FELTON.

It was a very handsome ball.

SIR VALENTINE.

It was.

FELTON.

What was amiss, then ? Was the music bad ?

SIR VALENTINE.

The music far from bad ! Most excellent !

Incomparably good—it were in place
In a concert room,—I find no fault with the music.

FELTON.

Are you not fond of dancing, then?

SIR VALENTINE.

I am—
Innocent pastime taken innocently
In honest mood!—But there are natures, Sir,
That should eschew it—which 'tis pernicious to—
As wine, that 's mirth to some, to some is madness!
I find no fault with dancing! 'Tis an act
Sets beauty off, proportion, grace; when these
Are too set off by modesty. For men,
And women more especially, of the vein
That 's opposite, I'd have them lookers on—
For their own sakes first—next for the sake of those,
Who what they'd blush to do, do grieve to see
Enacted.

FELTON.

Was there any dance to-night
Offended you?

SIR VALENTINE.

N—o, Sir—I cannot say—
Perhaps there is no harm in any dance.
I am not sure—Some may give too much license—
Yet not so much, but e'en in such a case
By delicacy 'twill be carried off
Becomingly. I might perhaps object—
Yet where's the thing that can defy objection?
But this I say, Sir, and I'll stand to it,
That modesty being to woman more
Than beauty—for, without, is beauty cheap—

That woman, who doth shew her beauty off
Before her modesty, forgets herself,
And merits forfeit of that high respect,
Which noble minds would bear her!

HERO. [*To* EMILY.

What lady, can you tell me, danc'd to night
As lady should not dance?

EMILY.

I do not know.

HERO. [*To* FELTON.

Do you, Sir?

FELTON.

No!

HERO. [*To* LORD ATHUNREE.

My Lord, do you?

LORD ATHUNREE.

No, Lady.

HERO.

Perhaps some lady, whom the gentleman
Himself did dance with, and some other noted—

SIR VALENTINE.

No lady, Madam, that did dance with me.
Who yields to me her hand shall ne'er forget
Herself—at least by my o'erstepping. She
Shall find I know the honor that she does me;
See in the freedom of the frolic measure
My reverence for her sex attending her;
And then be handed to her seat again,
For mine own credit sake if not for her's,
By all approv'd, as gracefully come off

In partnery of honest joyance!
No lady, Madam, that did dance with me.

LORD ATHUNREE.

The plague repay him for the lesson he
So freely reads me—in her presence too!

HERO.

Wilt please you name the lady gave offence?

SIR VALENTINE.

'Twere a presumptuous act for my poor tongue.
But if you know her, you must know her beauty,
Wherein I ne'er met fair to liken to her,
And that more fittingly shall name her for me.
A noble stature, stopping there, where sex
Would have it reach, and bid it go no farther;
A head of antique mould, magnificent
As may consist with softness and with sweetness;
Features, advertisement of thoughts and moods,
Wishes and fancies, such as it beseems
To lodge with chastity and tenderness
In sumptuous palace of rich loveliness;
And limbs of mould and act therewith consorting,
Making a paragon of symmetry!—
Gods, to such homeliness of use perverted,
As properties, to them were homeliness,
Should spurn to be applied to!

EMILY.

Are you ill,
That you turn pale?

HERO.

Ill!—What should make me ill?
I could be angry, were it worth my while,

At such disparagement of one, it seems
Is known to me,—but calumny is a thing
Defeats itself, and I should be despis'd
Did I pay heed to!

SIR VALENTINE.

Lady, you are right;
It shall be calumny—it should be so!
Vouchers so fair, should never be forsworn.
Alas for him, who is incredulous,
Yet would believe them rather far than doubt them!

[SIR VALENTINE *goes out, followed by* FELTON.

HERO.

A most strange gentleman!—an oddity!
I took him for a man of sense,—didn't you?
A fanciful and churlish gentleman!
Looks sour because another man looks pleased!
Lord Athunreee, wilt see my carriage brought
Close to the door before I venture out,
If not to tax your gallantry too much?

LORD ATHUNREE.

I fly to do it. [*Goes out.*

HERO.

Let me weep a moment
Upon your neck.—There! I am better now.
Are my eyes red?

EMILY.

Not much.

HERO.

I will appear
To have been laughing! Laughter bringeth tears.
Most excellent!—you should have kept it tho'

For another time! I have not strength to laugh!
As 'tis, I am so weak, I laugh and cry.

Re-enter ATHUNREE.

Lord Athunree, your courtesy has lost you
A most facetious story!

LORD ATHUNREE.

Tell it me.

HERO.

Tell it you! Tell it! I am dead already
With hearing it, and must not hear't again,
Would I go home to-night! A little plague,
To make me laugh, and know that I should cry,
For lack of very strength.—Come, let us go!
A charming ball! Fair night—most happy night!
I'll find a time to make *you* cry with laughing. [*To* EMILY.
A charming night—a very charming night!

[*They go out.*

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A Room in the House of MONSIEUR DE L'EPEE.

Enter, from an inner Room, WALSINGHAM *and* MONSIEUR DE L'EPEE.

DE L'EPEE.

Your progress answers to your practice, Sir;
Cause have you none for discontent. Confess,
You play the foil with twice the ease you did
A month ago. Might I be credited,
Not only each new week, but even day,
Puts to the blush the former one, so fast
You catch the mystery of the fair art.

WALSINGHAM.

Yes; but my fellow-pupil heads me still.

DE L'EPEE.

His quickness is your master.

WALSINGHAM.

Yet, 'tis strange!
With all my pains, I toil behind him still,
And he a very stripling!

DE L'EPEE.

'Tis not strength
That makes the odds, but art. To turn the foil
In practis'd hand, almost a wheaten straw
Hath stamina enough. The point deceived,
An infant's arm in distance lounges home;
The art is strength, and length, and every thing.

WALSINGHAM.

To say the truth, it is a noble art,
On which agility and grace attend,
With proper manhood keeping company,
As on none other;—making lightest ease
To champion force, and, as you say, bear off
The palm from it. In every act and state—
Salute, guard, parry, feint or pass—it hath
A bearing worthy of the eyes of kings
And their high consorts, when a practis'd hand
Like your's takes up the foil.

DE L'EPEE.

You flatter, Sir!

WALSINGHAM.

By my proud honour, no! But, to your pupil—
What is he?

DE L'EPEE.

I know not.

WALSINGHAM.

He is very young.

DE L'EPEE.

Yes; by his looks he has a teen or twain
To count;—tho' never scholar study plied

With manlier resolve and constancy.
It often moves my wonder, that so slight
And delicate a frame should undergo
What to robuster mould a thousand times
I have mark'd was weariness. Scarce lays he down
The foil, before he takes it up again,
Some parry, feint or lounge, unmastered yet,
To practise;—which he does with zest so keen,
I have thought, at times, that in his fancy's eye
There stood before his point an enemy,
The actor of some unatoned wrong,
Whose heart each thrust was meant for.—A good morning!
I am waited for.

WALSINGHAM.

Good morning to you, Sir. [DE L'EPEE *goes out.*
A noble fellow that!—a soldier who
A mighty captain followed, for the strides
With which he led to glory—nay, for them
Deserted not, when fortune back'd a world,
Marshall'd against her off-cast favourite!
Talk you of scars?—that Frenchman bears on crown,
Body and limb, his vouchers palpable,
For many a thicket he has struggled thro'
Of briery danger—wondering that he
Came off with even life, when right and left
His mates dropp'd thick beside him. A true man!
His rations with his master gone—for he
Was honour's soldier, that ne'er changes sides—
He left his country for a foreign one,
To teach his gallant art, and earn a home.
I know him to be honest, generous,

High-soul'd, and modest; every way a grace
To the fine, martial nation, whence he sprang!*

EUSTACE *enters from Inner Room.*

My fellow-pupil! (*Aside*). That was a shrewd guess
The Frenchman made. Are all these pains to pay
An enemy?—then is his case my own.
Would I could gain his confidence! but still,
Oft as I try he foils me with reserve
He shows to none beside! One more attempt.—
So, fellow-pupil! You have given o'er at last.
Right well you fenc'd to-day! you are weary?

EUSTACE.

No. Good morning, Sir.

WALSINGHAM.

I' faith, you "Sir" not me:
We have been mates too long, methinks, for term
So niggard, fellow-pupil!—Walsingham
Is my name. I prithee, when thou next accost'st me,
Say, Walsingham. Is't not enough, your foil
Keeps me at distance—will not let me in—
Rebukes me, shames me—will you with your tongue
O'erbear me too? Call me not "Sir," I pray,
But Walsingham.

EUSTACE.

It were to make too free
For mere acquaintanceship.

---

* This is a portrait. My brothers of Glasgow know and honour the gallant man who suggested it, and will judge how far it is a faithful one. At all events it is not flattered.

WALSINGHAM.

Acquaintanceship!
You have known me for a year. Friendship hath grown
In half that time.

EUSTACE.

Friendship grows not by time.

WALSINGHAM.

In sooth 'twould seem so. Daily have we met
For good a year—nor yet have shaken hands.
Give me thy hand, and let us hence be friends!
What! will you not? I'faith, you should—you shall!
I'll take it spite of you—yea, tho' you frown,
And call yourself my foe, which would be hard
To make a foe, striving to make a friend.

EUSTACE (*after a pause*).

I'll shake hands with you.

WALSINGHAM.

Ha!—a hearty grasp!
But take it not away so soon again,
Nor where you give your hand, refuse your eye.
Why don't you look at me?

EUSTACE.

Let go my hand!

WALSINGHAM.

Such haste to take away—so frank to give?

EUSTACE.

Let go my hand!—Well, you may keep it, Sir;
You cannot make it like its prison, nor,
When once 'tis free from't, enter it again.

WALSINGHAM.

Well—call me Walsingham, I'll let it go.
Why must I force you thus to be my friend?

EUSTACE.

Why should you? Force made never yet a friend.

WALSINGHAM.

For kindness, then! why would you hold me off?
A man repelled of Fortune! See you not,
I am not of the vein of those on whom
Her smiles she lavishes—nor do I think
With surfeit of such sweet you bought that cast
Of thoughtfulness, which, when I look upon you,
Like to my glass, shows me, methinks, myself!—
I am a man of honour and of heart.
Ah, too much heart! Come, call me Walsingham,
And then I'll let you go.

EUSTACE.

Well—Walsingham!

WALSINGHAM.

I' faith, most kindly did you sound my name;
Tongue never fell it yet more sweetly from,
Save one!—Save one!

EUSTACE.

Farewell

WALSINGHAM.

We'll walk together.

EUSTACE.

Nay.

WALSINGHAM.

Will you have it so? why have it so;

My love is not that sturdy beggar yet,
But spurning may suffice to stop its craving!
Yet ere you leave me, hear me—and then go.
Methinks our fates in something are alike;
To prove it so, or not, I'll tell thee mine.
Give thee my confidence—make thee indeed my friend!
Now, once for all, what say you?

EUSTACE.

Be it so.

WALSINGHAM.

Thy hand again, then!—Do we go together?

EUSTACE.

We do!—Have with you!

WALSINGHAM.

Now we are friends for ever! [*They go out.*

SCENE II.

A Room in HERO'S *Town House.*

Enter SIR WILLIAM *and* EMILY.

SIR WILLIAM.

At sea again! Blown ever from the port
We'd have her harbour in, by her wild fancies,
And far from land as ever! I did hope
This suitor had been anchorage had held her.

EMILY.

And so did I; she'll ne'er be held by suitor,

Long as there bows another—save it be
By a miracle. I say it, tho' I love her.

SIR WILLIAM.

And yet that lord hath held her.

EMILY.

So he hath,
By dint of mere audacity—some art
He owns makes other suitors quail, and she,
For vanity, hath still affected him,
As proud to have a vassal in a man
To whom his fellows bow.

SIR WILLIAM.

I am glad so slight
His power. I know him for a profligate,
With broken coffers, to replenish which
He merely follows her.

EMILY.

His practice 'twas
Which to this issue led—on some account
I know not—nay, nor guess. He durst not treat
Sir Valentine with overbearing mien,
So took advantage of fair Hero's weakness,
To play upon't, expose, and with disgust
Surfeit the man he fear'd.

SIR WILLIAM.

And he succeeded?

EMILY.

Ay, to the full, Sir, as I have possess'd you.

SIR WILLIAM.

I am sorry for it. He had begun to love her,
And would have made to her a worthy husband;

Safe guardian to her wealth; and one to make
A proud wife of a higher dame than she!
It crossly hath fallen out. But she is piqued,
You say, at his desertion?

EMILY.

Much, Sir!—Much!
She wept, as I acquainted you.

SIR WILLIAM.

You did,
And matter see I there. Unfeigned tears—
And such were her's—from deep-laid fountains flow,
Abiding in the heart! The argument
Which draws them thence, as deep must even go.
A curling lip I had not heeded—that
Were simple scorn—but they who weep for scorn
Do weep for something more. Sir Valentine
Hath not his peer in England! Trust me, girl,
She 's not so blind with folly, as not to see
His paramount desert.—Where is she?

EMILY.

Lock'd
In her chamber with her milliner,—so says
Her maid. These three hours have I crav'd admission,
But all in vain; she has not yet press'd pillow
Sufficient to repair her spirits from
The waste of yesternight.

SIR WILLIAM.

A wayward girl!
New dresses, pleasures, lovers—all things new,
Except herself. Would that would change as well!

Some mode she studies with her minister
Of novelty, will flog all former folly. [*Knocking.*
What sober knock is that?—Such seldom calls
At her fantastic door. Who knocks?

Enter SERVANT.

SERVANT.

A man,
Of formal habit and consorting speech,
Usher to one most young and fair; a maid
Who seems to know no use for beauty, but
To mortify it with ungainly guise.
She asks to see the mistress of the house.

SIR WILLIAM.

Admit her!—On what errand can she come?

[*Servant goes out, and returns, shewing in* CLEVER, *followed by* HERO, *both disguised as Quakers.*

Who art thou?

CLEVER.

Man unto Ruth Mapleson,
Who with the woman of the house would speak.

SIR WILLIAM.

The woman of the house!

EMILY.

Ruth Mapleson!

HERO.

Friend, am I right? This house of vanity,
Is't the abode of that unfortunate
They call the city maid? who to the use
Of one, perverts what Heaven did lavishly
Commit unto her, for the good of many!
Is this her house?—and if it is, I pray you

Acquaint her that a sister, pitying
Her hapless state of blindness, ignorance,
Omission and offence, hath come to her
To clear her vision, to inform her mind,
To teach her occupation, and from evil
To turn her steps aside.—Umph !

CLEVER.

Umph !

SIR WILLIAM.

My breath
Is almost stopp'd with wonder !

EMILY.

So is mine.
What can it mean ?

SIR WILLIAM.

Some poor fanatic 'tis,
Whose zeal hath warp'd her reason.

HERO.

Sinful man !
Thus is it with the children of the flesh ;
What argues wisdom they misconstrue madness !
Tho' through perverseness rather than conviction.
Tremble !—Look down !—Abase thee to the dust !
Should'st thou not blush at thy grey hairs, the vouchers
For thriftless years, for profitless experience !
'Tis winter with thee—harvest-time is past—
What hast thou garner'd ? Chaff instead of grain !
What doest thou with gauds like these, thy trappings ?
Why standest thou beneath this roof of pride,
That shouldst be thinking of the charnel-house
And the attire of its inhabitant ?
I know thee uncle to that maid of lightness,

That mistress of this house of emptiness,
And whom I come to chasten and to teach!
Umph!

CLEVER.

Umph!

EMILY.

Dear Sir! who is't? I grow uneasy!
With strangeness yet familiarity
She strikes me, that consist not! I do feel
As though an apparition stood before me,
And wish she were away!

SIR WILLIAM.

And so do I!

HERO (*to Emily*).

And thou, poor flesh and blood!—illusion! heirdom
O' the worm! that think'st thyself all soundness, yet
Art all corruption! Why abid'st thou in
The lazar-house? Depart from it! Pull off
Its dress, and don the clean and wholesome guise
Of plainness and humility—Umph!

CLEVER.

Umph!

SIR WILLIAM.

This bold intrusion and address—

HERO.

Peace, Satan!
And yet, perhaps I wrong you! Privily
You may condemn proud Hero's fantasies?

SIR WILLIAM.

I do.

EMILY.

And so do I.

HERO.

O do you so?
Then are ye not, as I did reckon you,
O' the children of the Prince of Darkness?

SIR WILLIAM *and* EMILY.

No.

HERO.

You see that she is very vain?

EMILY.

We else were blind.

SIR WILLIAM.

Stone blind!

HERO.

Capricious?

EMILY.

As many moods as there's hours in the day.

SIR WILLIAM.

Say minutes, rather!

HERO.

Fond of pleasure?

EMILY.

Her constant occupation.

SIR WILLIAM.

'Tis her meat
And drink; rest, business, studies, prayers, and sleep!

HERO.

She hath no constancy in aught—
Lovers especially?

EMILY.

She changes them
Too often.

SIR WILLIAM.

She doth use them as her dresses!
Shew her a new one, she casts off the last,
How new soe'er put on.

HERO.

I pity her.

EMILY.

She scarce deserves it.

SIR WILLIAM.

Pity is too good
For such a piece of waywardness, perverseness,
Pride, folly, fantasy, and emptiness!

HERO.

So then we are all of the same mind?

EMILY.

Exactly.

SIR WILLIAM.

Not a pin's point difference!

HERO.

You would approve that I reform her then?

EMILY.

Reform her! could you do so? Do so.

SIR WILLIAM.

Do!
Do! Make her anything but what she is.

EMILY.

Change cannot fail to better her.

SIR WILLIAM.

No change
Can make her worse!—Reform her, pray!

HERO.

I will.

SIR WILLIAM *and* EMILY.

When ?

HERO.

When you take her for another thing
And find her just the same !—Oh, uncle, fie !
Fie, Emily ! is this your loyalty ?

SIR WILLIAM.

What means this metamorphosis?

HERO.

Defence
Of my sex's rights—assertion of my own !
Instruction to that master-work, call'd man !
Protest and re-establishment of due
Prerogative ! reduction of rebellion,
Compell'd from reared crest to bended knee !
Pains, penalties, bonds, confiscations, deaths,
To follow thereupon !

SIR WILLIAM.

Why, niece, what wind
Doth bring this sudden storm ?

HERO.

Are you a man ?

SIR WILLIAM.

I trust I am !

HERO.

Then if you are, you know
The privileges of a single woman.
We have few, Heav'n help us ! when we change the state
Most rightly dubb'd of single blessedness !
Is 't not a single woman's right to rule ?

SIR WILLIAM.

It is.

HERO.

To have her will her law?

SIR WILLIAM.

It is.

HERO.

To have as many tastes, moods, fits, as she likes?

SIR WILLIAM.

It is.

HERO.

To come, to go, to smile, to frown,
To please, to pain, to love, to hate, do aught
Without dispute?

SIR WILLIAM.

It is.

HERO.

Is't not enough,
You have leave to look upon her—listen to her—
Stand in her presence—wait upon her? Must
Her 'haviour, speech, be what you like, or what
It likes her sovereign self that they should be?

SIR WILLIAM.

What likes her sovereign self!

HERO.

You *are* a man!
Would all your sex were like you! Who are not,
Are not for me, believe me! Look you, uncle!
I'll make the saucy traitor feel my power,
Or I will break my heart! He thinks me fair—
I thank him! Well-proportioned—very much
Beholden to him! Dignified and graceful—

A man of shrewd perception! very!—send him
On expedition of discovery!

SIR WILLIAM.

Whom mean you, Hero?

HERO.

Whom?—Sir Valentine!
He has made his bow! Indeed, a gracious one—
A stately, courtly, condescending one!
Ne'er may I courtsey, if he bow not lower!
I'll bring him to his knees as a spoiled child
With uplift hands that asketh pardon, then
Command him up, and never see me more!

SIR WILLIAM.

Why, how hath this befallen?

HERO.

I did not dance
To please him! No, Sir! He is a connoisseur
In dancing!—hath a notion of his own
Of a step! In carriage, attitude, has taste,
Dainty as palate of an epicure,
Which, if you hit not to a hair, disgust
Doth take the place of zest! He is sick of me!
My feet the frolic measure may indulge,
But not my heart—mine eye, my cheek, my lip,
Must not be cognizant of what I do—
As wood and marble could be brought to dance,
And look like wood and marble! I shall teach him
Another style! Come! I have found you out;
Will you compound for your sedition,
And help me? Come! how say you, little traitress?

EMILY.

Content.

HERO.

And you, most reverend rebellion?

SIR WILLIAM.

Command me aught, that I can do in reason.

HERO.

Can do in reason! In what reason? There
Are fifty kinds of reason! There 's a fool's reason,
And a wise man's reason, and a knave's reason, and
An honest man's reason, and an infant's reason,
And reason of a grandfather—but there's
A reason 'bove them all, and that alone
Can stand me now in stead—a woman's reason!
Wilt thou be subject unto me in that?

SIR WILLIAM.

I will.
But tell me whence this speech of solemn phrase?

HERO.

From one I knew and lov'd at school—a girl
Half, by the sect that practise it, brought up.
But she of thought and will therewith consorting,
The mistress likewise was—most veritable.
Her name was Helen Mowbray—by the arts
Of that same lord to whom I owe the coil
I would unwind me from, and whom, thro' whim,
Not liking, I have countenanc'd. 'Tis said
She fell—but not in my belief. How is this?
I am growing serious! You will help me?

SIR WILLIAM.

Yes.

HERO.

That's my good Uncle! That's a darling Uncle!
There ne'er was kinder, nor more sensible!

A good, dear, wise, obedient, docile Uncle !
Give me a kiss ! Hence, Master Clever ! Do
What I directed you—Sir Valentine
Is not yet out. Invite him where I told you—
To the house at Greenwich. [*Exit* CLEVER.

SIR WILLIAM.

What dost thou intend ?

HERO.

Order the carriage—no ; it must be one
They lend for hire :—and come along with me—
I'll tell you on the way. Emily !—Uncle !
Look you ! (*throws her glove down*) I'll have him, as my glove
that there,
At my feet doth lie, till I do pick him up !
And I will pick him up—but in a way !
There !—give it me again—O, you dear Uncle,
To help my plot !—do, what I wish !—You ought
To be an Uncle ! There 's another kiss !
And if I do not make him kiss the rod,
I'm ne'er a niece deserving such an Uncle !
Come ! come !—I did not dance to please him ! Come.

[*They go out.*

SCENE III.

SIR VALENTINE'S *House.*

Enter SIR VALENTINE.

SIR VALENTINE.

Oh, pitiable case! so rich a stamp,
And yet the metal base! For what high things
Did nature fashion her!—whose rich intent
Had she but half fulfill'd, no wealth, no state
That earth can furnish, for aggrandizement
Of craving and insatiate ambition,
Conferr'd on her, had given her half her due,
Far less its debtor made her! Misery!
To find the good we hop'd, the bane we hate!
Hate!—O, perverse and doubtful course of love,
That in the goal it pants for, finds its grave!
That reaches for a bliss, and clasps a pang!
That now doth own a mine, and naught anon!
O beggary most poor, that from the lapse
Of dwindled riches grows!

Enter SERVANT.

SERVANT.

You are wanted, Sir—

SIR VALENTINE.

Who wants me?

SERVANT.

One who brings an errand from
Sir William Sutton, and craves speech with you.

SIR VALENTINE.

Admit him. [SERVANT *goes out.—Enter* CLEVER.
Well?

CLEVER.

Are you the man they call
Sir Valentine de Grey?

SIR VALENTINE.

That man am I.

CLEVER.

Then, being he, another man they call
Sir William Sutton, sends me here to pray
Thy company this afternoon, to meet
Some friends who dine with him at Greenwich.

SIR VALENTINE.

Say,
I cannot come.

CLEVER.

Art thou engaged, friend?

SIR VALENTINE.

No.

CLEVER.

Then thou speak'st not true. Thou can'st come.

SIR VALENTINE.

Say,
I will not come.

CLEVER.

He bade me say to thee
Thou *must* come.

SIR VALENTINE.

Must come

CLEVER.

Yes; so come along.
For he did charge me bring thee, and I said
I would; and not to bring thee, were to break
My word, and make him angry.

SIR VALENTINE.

Tell him, then,
I was not in.

CLEVER.

I will not tell a lie.

SIR VALENTINE.

Art thou his servant?

CLEVER.

No; but man to one
That's niece unto him—that is, in the flesh—
Not in the spirit.

SIR VALENTINE.

Wherefore?

CLEVER.

Know'st thou him,
And know'st thou not he is a man of sin?
Ruth Mapleson is of the faithful!

SIR VALENTINE.

Who?

CLEVER.

Ruth Mapleson.

SIR VALENTINE.

I know no niece he hath,
Save one—fair Mistress Sutton.

CLEVER.

Name her not—
Daughter of darkness.

SIR VALENTINE.

Liar!

CLEVER.

Thou dost lie
To call me so.

SIR VALENTINE.

Wretch!

CLEVER.

Thou dost lie again.
I am a godly and a happy man,
That waits upon Ruth Mapleson; the niece
Of him they call Sir William Sutton; and
Cousin to Hero Sutton, whom in naught
Doth Ruth resemble save her face and form,
Where she might pass for her, she is so like her.

SIR VALENTINE.

So like her! said'st thou, like her?

CLEVER.

Thou didst hear
I did; so like her, 'twere a cunning eye
Could tell the one from the other. That's my hand;
I take 't away, and show it thee again:
Is that another hand?

SIR VALENTINE.

Knave, 'tis the same.

CLEVER.

Miscall me not, friend! Knave is not my name,
But Obadiah. Use me civilly,
That do instruct thee, who art ignorant.
Not more in likeness is that hand the same,
Than Hero Sutton is Ruth Mapleson
In feature, figure, face, complexion, all

That makes the outward woman—but within,
Winter and summer are not less akin!

SIR VALENTINE.

How, knave?

CLEVER.

I told thee not to call me "knave;"
My name is Obadiah.

SIR VALENTINE.

Obadiah
I'll call thee then. How are these cousins as
Unlike as winter is to summer?

CLEVER.

Thus.—Is winter barren? so is the maiden Hero; is it made up of fogs and rain? so is the maiden Hero of vapours and the spleen; hath it much cloud, and little sun? so hath the maiden Hero great discontent, small content; hath it long night, and brief day? so hath the maiden Hero lasting displeasure, short favour; is there any depending upon it? no more is there upon the maiden Hero; do you wish it heartily away? so would you be rid of the maiden Hero.

SIR VALENTINE.

I fear thou art a slanderer.

CLEVER.

I see
Thou lack'st good manners, which is grievous, friend,
In one of thy degree. Thou callest names
As scavengers that quarrel in the streets
Most unbecomingly!

SIR VALENTINE.

Well; now proceed.
What of her cousin?

CLEVER.

Tho' a godly man,
Yet am I flesh and blood, and thou dost vex
My spirit, friend, by so misusing me.
I tell thee once again, my name is not
Liar, nor knave, nor slanderer, nor aught
But Obadiah.

SIR VALENTINE.

Well—enough of that;
Her cousin? Come! Her cousin?

CLEVER.

Tho' I am
A man of peace, I am a valiant man.
I combat not, but yet the elements
Of war are given me, friend! I am full of them,
Save what is in me of the goodly thing
That mortifies the flesh, and keeps them in
Subjection! Yea, I am a warlike man!
Yea, verily, a very warlike man!

SIR VALENTINE.

I ask thy pardon.

CLEVER.

I do grant it thee;
Thou dost a proper thing; and now shalt hear,
Wherein the maiden Ruth, who, outwardly,
Is to the maiden Hero what that maiden
Is to herself, is, inwardly, reverse
As summer is to winter.

SIR VALENTINE.

Prithee on!

CLEVER.

Is summer fertile? is summer clear? hath it little cloud, much sun, long day and short night—and that more like day, than night? is summer constant, and do you wish it never away? so is the maiden Ruth bounteous; so is the maiden Ruth cheerful; so hath she twenty smiles for one frown; lasting favour, brief displeasure, which you would almost take to be favour; so is she little liable to change; so would you wish to have her ever with you!

SIR VALENTINE.

Where dwells this cousin?

CLEVER.

In Greenwich, friend, whither thou goest; not in the same house with him that sends for thee—for light dwelleth not with darkness—but in another habitation, where her books, and her flowers, and her own sweet thoughts, which are fairer and wiser than either, are her only companions.

SIR VALENTINE.

I'll go with thee to Greenwich. Lead on!

CLEVER.

Hold, friend!—You must do all things soberly.

[*They go out,* CLEVER *preceding, with extreme gravity.*

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The Outskirts of London.

Enter EUSTACE *and* WALSINGHAM.

EUSTACE.

Now for the confidence you promised me.

WALSINGHAM.

Can'st thou not guess my story? Look at me!
Seem my years more than his you'd reckon in
Life's outset, when beneath our feet all 's flowers,
Above our heads all sun? Can'st not divine
What could alone o'ercast and wither thus?
Nor only take away the adjuncts sweet
Of that fair prime of hope, but prospect leave
Of nought but cloud and barrenness?

EUSTACE.

Ambition?

WALSINGHAM.

No; that 's an after-game. There 's one we play
Before, o'er which the heart doth throb, as o'er
None other! where we throw the die, whose turn
Nine times in ten 's the oracle foretells
All chance to come! which, if we play in earnest—

And light are they, who of that game make light—
We make ourselves for ever, or lose all,
Doubling the value of our being, or
Reducing it to naught!—a game, methinks,
Which you have play'd at—Love.—Am I not right?

EUSTACE.

You are.

WALSINGHAM.

You didn't win?

EUSTACE (*hesitatingly*).

I—didn't.

WALSINGHAM.

How?
You speak as one that yet did neither lose—
Whose game not yet was out—a chance, altho'
With heavy odds against him. Mark me; if
Thou hast rivals whom she entertains like thee,
With just so much of hope as doth suffice
To keep them suitors still, while each can say,
She 's mine, as well as t'other—give her up!
Away with her! Abandon her for ever!
Thou woo'st, what, if thou win'st—the tongue is kind—
Not that doth give thee joy—but wish thee dead!
The keeper, not the owner, of a thing
Wherein is lock'd thy life, and thy life's gems—
Thy peace and honor dear!

EUSTACE.

Won such a maid
Thy love?

WALSINGHAM.

Not such a maid! No; she did live
Forbid to all but me. The statue's ear
And eye, you'd think, as much perception had
Of wonder at the consummate chisel's skill,
As her's of praise from others' eyes and tongues.
But, oh! at lightest glance or sound of mine,
How would the rich and fair-wrought marble glow!

EUSTACE.

Thou mourn'st her dead, then?

WALSINGHAM.

Dead?—Ay, dead! a corpse,
A mouldering corpse, that's with corruption hous'd.
Which skill medicinal can ne'er restore
To its sweet life again!—the which to weep
Is all that fondest eyes may look for now.
The life, alas! of her fair honor's gone!

EUSTACE.

What! liv'd she but for thee, and gave she up
Her richest jewel to another?

WALSINGHAM.

You
Shall hear my story. What in form she was,
I will not paint to you.—Each lover has,
You know, the fairest she—say, mine's a paragon
As much as thine—nay, of the very charm
That's crest of all, thou wilt but make a seat
To mount some plume of her's, whom thou affect'st,
That shall transcend it far! I know it—so
Forbear. Yet had you e'er set eyes upon her!

Oh! she did stand alone! To truest hearts
The sight of her was wonderful estrangement,
Weaning them for a time from things, howe'er
Clung dotingly to before—that mistresses
Have sadden'd to see eyes, that blaz'd on them
Ere they were turn'd away, turn back again
Listless and icy cold! Riches and rank,
Bestudded o'er and gilded, have look'd blank
To see themselves outshone without a gem!
Nay, very hostesses, whose only care
Was to behold their costly huswifry
Approv'd, have been discomfited to see
Their tables crown'd as ne'er they were before,
And she the only garnish of the board!

EUSTACE.

Thought you not others' eyes did see like yours?

WALSINGHAM.

No! no! I saw they did—I felt they did—
Felt it thro' many a pang of doubt—but not
Thro' fear of her demerits, but my own!

EUSTACE.

Ne'er gave she cause to doubt?

WALSINGHAM.

No!

EUSTACE.

Still she fail'd?

WALSINGHAM.

As life—when health, that is the heart of life,
Seems sound to the very core! has ne'er given sign
Of flaw or speck—this moment in the bloom—
The next, is blasted!

EUSTACE.

What you do assert,
The more you do assert, the more I doubt!
What! truth to falsehood in a moment turn?
Virtue to vice? Love to estrangement? Love!
And in a woman! Had she lov'd before?

WALSINGHAM.

No!

EUSTACE.

Her first love, too! But she was a child?

WALSINGHAM.

No; in the blush of bursting womanhood.

EUSTACE.

And left thee for another? No declining
Of that first passion? Never seen to wane—
A little now—now more? but all at once
Go out! Impossible! You've been deceiv'd!
Abus'd! you have! my life, my soul upon it!

WALSINGHAM.

They're costly pledges to be forfeited;
Then risk them not!

EUSTACE.

What can'st thou set against them?

WALSINGHAM.

Proofs! facts!

EUSTACE.

Facts?

WALSINGHAM.

Facts! *My* cause thou wast engag'd in?
How is't I find thee in another's listed?

EUSTACE.

What is the cause of her thou lov'st, but thine?

WALSINGHAM.

Not if she's false.

EUSTACE.

But if she's true?

WALSINGHAM.

She 's not!
By truth, she 's not!

EUSTACE.

By truth, she *is!*—unless,
Things, that do coincide much as the East
And West—high Heaven and the Abyss—noonday
And midnight—reason and madness—contraries
Confess'd and palpable—for so oppos'd,
I own, do your averments seem to me—
You prove are in accordance.

WALSINGHAM.

Listen, then!
Who wins a prize, thou know'st wins envy too.
With such a prize thou wilt not wonder then
That many grudg'd my fortune! 'Mong the rest
Was one—a satire on the saucy code
That makes the wreath of merit birth-right, when
No law can make the grace that wins it so.
This titled profligate alone, no check,
Reserve, rebuke, rejection, could divert
From pressing still his suit: my arm had tried it,
But that she hung upon it, minding me
The life I'd peril was the heart of her's!
She did!—and for enforcement show'd to me

Vouchers on vouchers—genuine sighs and tears!
Art couldn't feign such—I'll do justice to her—
She then was true—as true as haggard since!
Why weep'st thou?

EUSTACE.

Thou dost weep; and tears draw tears,
When grief itself doth fail.

WALSINGHAM.

Then dry your eyes;
You'll ne'er see mine again! you think me lost
To honour?

EUSTACE.

No!

WALSINGHAM.

What not to weep a wanton?

EUSTACE.

O, not a wanton!

WALSINGHAM.

How!

EUSTACE.

Not *then* a wanton!

WALSINGHAM.

Not then! The devil was once an angel—what
Of that? He fell!—who weeps him? no one! What
Tho' she was once a spirit of light, as he was,
When now she's black as he?

EUSTACE.

Nay!

WALSINGHAM.

Doubt it not!
To cavil at the right we feel to writhe
Is aggravation, that adds wrong to wrong,
And drives before-o'erburthen'd patience mad!
The sun did stare upon it!—'twas not lewdness
Chamber'd—behind the curtain—'twas i'the street,
Light as noonday could make it!—without cloak!
Hood! veil!—Now call it questionable! Nothing
To mask the wanton!—Oh! for a thunderbolt,
To strike me then!—From a noted, libell'd stew,
Led by the noble libertine—his trophy,
Worn on his arm in the gaze of every eye—
I saw her issue.

EUSTACE.

Did she shun thee?

WALSINGHAM.

No!

EUSTACE.

That was a proof of innocence.

WALSINGHAM.

Of guilt!
Rank! rank!—a sudden and entire infection,
A touch and rottenness! as from the bite
Of a serpent, in an instant ruddy life
To black corruption grows! Why should she shun me?
She had her tale at hand! 'Twas but to make
Her paramour her friend; their assignation,
A freak of chance; her reconcilement to
A man she loath'd before, a debt; and for
That debt assign a cause equivalent;—

All which she did in a breath! 'Twas clear, Sir; clear!
The truth spoke for itself! Fact born of fact—
Nought out of place or disproportionate!
As obviously that follow'd this; this that;
As this doth chime with this, and that with that!
A thing one must believe! From end to end,
A lie, Sir!—He had sav'd her from a villain!
The villain! When appeal'd to, he did damn her!
" He fain would bear her out! His life was her's!—
" His fortune—but upon a point of honour—
" In question with a man of honour—not
" That he denied her fair averments tho'—
" He pray'd she would excuse him!"

EUSTACE.

You believ'd him!
Him you believ'd, that ne'er was true before!
Her disbeliev'd, was ne'er before but true?

WALSINGHAM.

She did admit it.

EUSTACE.

How?

WALSINGHAM.

By damning silence!

EUSTACE.

Is't guilt alone, convicted, that keeps silence?
Guilt—saucy guilt—that dares to break the law
Of God and man! Remember you no case,
Where innocence accus'd hath all at once
Been stricken dumb?—appall'd to undergo
The charge of sin, that never could endure
The thought of sin? Appearances against her,

And witness for her none, but her own heart?
Her very blood betraying her, deserting
Its post upon her cheek, whence, were it bold
As honest, 'fore a host 'twould ne'er give way!
Remember you no case like this? or if
Your memory none records, is such a one
So much at odds with probability,
Your fancy cannot image it? A woman,
Young, charily brought up, as vestal for
The fane! Suppose a novice so sincere,
She lov'd and knew it not, till, by its signs,
Others more skill'd did find the passion out,
And tell her that she loved!

WALSINGHAM.

Thou draw'st herself!

EUSTACE.

And such a one, by accident or plot,
Sudden to stand in such predicament
As of her honour valid question founds—
In presence too of him whose value for
The gem doth make it doubly, trebly, dear—
And then, appealing to a villain's truth,
To find the tongue, should clear, but blurr'd her more!—
Oh! I would ask for signs of life as soon
From lips of stone, as look for words from her's!
She couldn't speak! Speak? breathe! she would be stunn'd
To utter lapse of every sense, except
That at her heart, which told it at that time
It would be bliss to break! Should she be true
At last—

WALSINGHAM.

No more of this!

EUSTACE.

Have I not shaken—
Not much, but somewhat—say, a little—say,
A very little—your belief of her
Dishonour?

WALSINGHAM.

Speak not of her.

EUSTACE.

If she is pure,
Despite appearances, as first you thought her;
Constant, despite desertion; and despite
Wrongs, scornings, brandings, fond;—it may be fonder—
For woman's love's a plant, I've often heard,
Which mocketh all that thrive in winter time,
Not only keeping green, but growing then.

WALSINGHAM.

You take, methinks, strange interest in her fate!

EUSTACE.

I have a friend, whose fate resembles her's—
Whose cause I'm sworn to right! Besides, we're friends.
Thou art not happy?

WALSINGHAM.

No.

EUSTACE.

I'd see thee so.
To have thee so, I'd wish thee in the wrong.
She's not forgotten—is she?

WALSINGHAM.

Would she were!

EUSTACE.

Perhaps thou lov'st her still?

WALSINGHAM.

To madness! There's
My malady. I love her—not what she is,
But what she was. What's present—that's her swerving,
That's palpable, which you may see, touch, handle,
Define, weigh, prove by any test is real—
Feels but a phantasm, a conceit, a dream,
A horrible one!—in contrast with what's past,
Her worth, her love, her constancy, that vanish'd
Or e'er you question'd them.

EUSTACE.

Art sure of that?
Come, come, thou'rt not, at least, thou'rt not quite sure.
Now did she stand before thee undismay'd,
Confiding in thy honour—say thy patience—
Say thy endurance—

WALSINGHAM.

If my eyes could look
The mandate of my soul, they would flash lightning on her,
To blast her where she stood! What ails thee?

EUSTACE.

Nought—
What did I do? How did I look? What saw'st,
To ask? Did I turn pale, or start, or what?
Do I tremble? Feel!—I am past fear, grief, pain,
As death! Give me thy arm, and come with me.
I'll shew thee what a piece of rock thou thought'st
Did quake. Thou a false woman, as thou think'st her,
Would'st revenge—I would revenge a woman wrong'd,
Bitterly wrong'd; so wrong'd, that after her
None should complain of hardship! Come and see,
Which holds his purpose most tenaciously. [*They go out.*

SCENE II.

A Chamber in HERO'S *House at Greenwich.*

Enter SIR VALENTINE *and* CLEVER.

SIR VALENTINE.

I tell thee, I must see her!

CLEVER.

Friend, thy face,
Albeit no modest one, thy deeds outdo
In forwardness! I brought thee but to see
The maiden's house—and thou would'st enter it!
Nor therewith rest'st content—but must have speech
With her that owns it, and escheweth thee
As all ungodly things!

SIR VALENTINE.

And I will have it!
So tell thyself—but gently say to her,
A stranger craveth audience. Mind—a stranger.
And do my bidding; else I may forget
Thou art a man of peace, and, may be, beat thee.
Yea—beat thee—I repeat it! and, I pray thee,
Make me not do 't again!

CLEVER.

I will submit—
'Ere I will use the argument o' th' flesh,
For that would hurt my spirit. Umph! I am gone!

[*Goes out.*

SIR VALENTINE.

So far, so well! Admittance I have gain'd,
And now an audience wait—but doubtingly.
Her cousin!—Then behoves me change my name,
Else, knowing me for Hero's suitor, she
Will spurn me. Yes! I'll even call myself
Sir Launcelot de Vere.—Can this be she?
The knave hath mock'd me—and the world of hopes
That sudden rose to my imagining
Doth melt to nothing.—Stay!—It forms again!
It grows to probability.—No vapour
That takes a passing form, is here and gone,
But a sincere and palpable creation!
Another Hero is there—or I do see
The same!—Oh, likeness to beholding, e'en
Incredible! that makes with wonderment
The vision waver, and the utterance fail!

Enter HERO (*disguised as before*).

HERO.

Well? What's your will?

SIR VALENTINE.

Forgive me, lady, if,
With occupation of mine eyes, awhile
I did forget the office of my tongue
To give thee 'custom'd salutation.
Still would I gaze, nor speak; art what thou seem'st?

HERO.

What seem I, friend?

SIR VALENTINE.

Likeness—unlikeness! A thing

Most different—and yet the very same!
What I would give averment of most strong—
Again most strong deny! The form of the bane,
With the sweet virtue of the antidote!
The rose, was canker'd yesterday, to-day
Freshness and soundness to the very core!
Oh beauty! that doth know its proper pride,
And nothing deigns to ask to set it off
Except simplicity, that offers nought,
Yet all that's due performs! I have not liv'd
Till now!—I have but dealt with shows of life,
Automatons, that do not know themselves,
But act from causes are no part of them!
But here is nature's mechanism—mind
And soul—a body fitting them, informing
With motions of their own.

HERO.

Friend, art thou mad?

SIR VALENTINE.

Mad, lady?

HERO.

Rational, thou canst not be!

SIR VALENTINE.

Not rational?

HERO.

If that—which much I doubt—
Certain not favour'd with the grace of truth.

SIR VALENTINE.

Doubt'st thou I utter aught but truth?

HERO.

I doubt
Thy wits, thy wisdom, or thy truth. Not mad,
Thou art not wise—if wise, thou speak'st not truth.
And sooth to say, thy dress of vanity,
Thy looks of wildness, and thy air assur'd,
Where one who knew propriety would feel
Disturbance—this abrupt intrusion, which
Nor leave, nor introduction, nor acquaintance
Doth justify—approve thee void of truth,
Unwise, or mad!—if none of these, a man
Of cloddish nature, base and ignorant!

SIR VALENTINE.

Oh! say not cloddish nature! Say not base
Nor ignorant! It is the dignity
Of man, that the bright stars do tempt his mind
To scan the empyrean where they sit,
Plac'd infinite beyond terrestrial reach,
And scan their uses and their essences,—
High argument of his affinity
To him that made them, and the immortal light
That shall outlast this filmy shadowy sphere
Whereon they look and smile! 'Twas told to me
That thou wast perfect fair—I doubted that,
For I had found, methought, the paragon
Of beauty's wealth in woman! then 'twas said
That thou wast wise—I wish'd thee that, for still,
Tho' oft at fault, in noble house I have lodg'd
Noble inhabitant! 'twas said again
That thou wast good—then I believ'd thee wise,
For wisdom should bear goodness or no fruit!
And, good and wise, believ'd thee fairest too,

And coveted! Nor come I without leave—
Thy simple life eschewing worldly forms,
Was pledge for leave! Nor lack I introduction
That honest errand bring to vouch for me.
Nor, least of all, acquaintance—I have known thee
Since matur'd thought, my nature's fondest wish
Informing, told it loveliness of soul,
Yet more than body, doth belong to woman,
And, therewith when abiding, doth make up
The highest sum that earthly happiness
Amounts to—nearest what we hope in Heaven.

HERO.

Friend, dost thou know thou talkest to a worm?

SIR VALENTINE.

A worm?

HERO.

A mite!

SIR VALENTINE.

A mite?

HERO.

Nor yet a mite—
A congregate of evils, whereunto
The worm and mite are strangers!

SIR VALENTINE.

Evils!

HERO.

Know'st not
That beauty will take cold? will have the tooth-ache?
Will catch a fever?—that its peachy cheek
Will canker in a night?—that it's sweet lips,

Palace of smiles, spasm doth compel to change
Their garish tenants for uncouth contortions?
That its fair dress of pride—its velvet skin—
Humours will spot, discolour?—that, in brief,
It is a thing in value vanishing
As fickle merchandise, which rates to-day
Enormously—the next, may go a begging?
And, worse than all, that its chief merit lies
In wishing, not possessing?—coveted,
Of purchase measureless—obtain'd, worth nothing?

SIR VALENTINE.

Thou mean'st the beauty that but meets the eye?

HERO.

I mean the beauty thou alone dost see,
And prov'st thou only see'st. Why, what pains
Thou takest with a common piece of clay
To set it off! a fine account to turn
The bow of God to—meant for spiritual,
And not corporeal use—with divers tints
To clothe thy body! besides lading it
With the mind's produce—gems and metals—proof
Far more *without* concerns thee than *within!*
Oh! that a nature of immortal reach
Should house its aspirations in a crib
Like this poor tiny world! and, taught to look
Above the coronets of the fair stars,
Go proud with grains of dust and gossamer,
The property of things inferior to him,
As motes unto the sun! But I forget—thy errand?

SIR VALENTINE.

Love!

HERO.

'Tis clear, thou'rt mad! What! love
Whom thou did'st never see?

SIR VALENTINE.

Nay, pardon me
And let thy patience lend me audience, while
I show thee my credentials, on the faith
Of which I come. I have seen thee very oft—

HERO.

Stark mad!

SIR VALENTINE.

Nay, rational—as rational
As reason in its sober'st, perfect mood—
Held converse with thee, countless times.

HERO.

Broke loose
From Bedlam!

SIR VALENTINE.

Walk'd and sat with thee—

HERO.

I trust
Thy keeper is at hand!

SIR VALENTINE.

He came with me.

HERO.

Where is he?

SIR VALENTINE.

Here, altho' thou see'st him not.
My keeper's Love. I have woo'd thee for a month!

HERO.

Hoa! help!

SIR VALENTINE.

Be not alarm'd.

HERO.

Nay, touch me not!
When did'st thou break thy chains?

SIR VALENTINE.

I wear them yet;
The subtle ones that self-same beauty forg'd,
Which now I look upon—most gorgeous dress,
But by another worn.

HERO.

Oh! you have lov'd
One that resembles me.

SIR VALENTINE.

I have.

HERO.

'Tis not
A fit, then?

SIR VALENTINE.

No; for fits are vanishing.
This is a mood like nature's, lasts for life.

Enter CLEVER.

CLEVER.

Why did'st thou call? I heard thy voice, in fear.

HERO.

All's well, good Obadiah.

CLEVER.

Is it so?
Then I may go again. Young man, beware

Thou frighten'st not that maiden. We are meek,
And offer not offence; but meeting it,
As injury will make the worm rebel,
We turn, and we are strong—yea, very strong!
Whose wrath, albeit a pebble, hath avail
To smite a giant!—therefore, tempt it not!
Umph! [*Exit.*

HERO.

Thou hast known a maiden like me?

SIR VALENTINE.

Yes;
I have lov'd a maid, most like thee—most unlike;
Without, as costly—but within, as poor
To thee, as penury to affluence.

HERO.

And did'st thou love and woo her for a month,
And a defaulter thus? 'Twas grievous lack
Of penetration.

SIR VALENTINE.

Nay, 'twas specious show
That valid credit won.

HERO.

Thou art a man
Like all thy worldly class, of shallow mind.
Thy heart is in thine eyes: what pleaseth them
Is sure of that.

SIR VALENTINE.

Nay, I had then lov'd on.

HERO.

What cur'd thy love?

SIR VALENTINE.

I saw her in a dance
Light nature show—

HERO.

A dance! Oh! I have heard
Of such a thing. An idle pastime. What
But folly comes of folly? Do you dance?

SIR VALENTINE.

I do.

HERO.

What kind of a thing is it? Come, shew me!

SIR VALENTINE.

I pray you to excuse me.

HERO.

Nay, but dance.

SIR VALENTINE.

I pray you, ask me not.

HERO.

Thou dancest badly?

SIR VALENTINE.

Nay, I have won some credit in the dance.

HERO.

Then do the thing thou hast won credit by.

SIR VALENTINE.

I cannot.

HERO.

Friend, thou art asham'd to dance.

SIR VALENTINE.

Nay, not asham'd.

HERO.

Then dance!

SIR VALENTINE.

'Twere out of time
And place.

HERO.

What, out of time and place, and to
A man of gallantry, to do the thing
A lady wishes him; and he the while
On sufferance in her presence! I do see!
Thou art in a grave mood, and for a man to dance,
And look like Solomon, I must suppose
Were more offence to seriousness, than wear
A cap and bells. Friend, it is very clear
Thou canst not dance, and look like a wise man—
Yet thou didst woo a lady, thou did'st say,
And cast her off, because she did not dance
With gravity!

SIR VALENTINE.

She danced with lightness more
Than lightest measure warranted. No thing
A modest woman does—say that it touches
The utmost verge of license—but that cincture,
Of better proof than zone of adamant,
Its holy and offence-repelling fires
Doth wave around her, that the libertine,
Unwon by honour, yet is tam'd by awe!
She danc'd to gladden eyes whose burning glances
Turn thoughts of honest men on flashing swords,
On flame at stains washed out alone by blood!
The empire of her beauty giving prey
To parasites, who love for their own ends,
And by their homage shame!

HERO.

We have talk'd enough.

SIR VALENTINE.

Your pardon! Yet we have not talk'd at all—
The errand yet untold, that brought me here—
I would have leave to woo thee.

HERO.

Thou! a man
Of the vain world!

SIR VALENTINE.

Nay, of no world but thine!

HERO.

Thou of my world! How com'st thou by these gauds—
Lace, ribbons, tinsel, trinkets, slashes—not
To name that most egregious vanity
Thou mountest in thy cap, and the poor bird
It was purloin'd from wore for use, not show!
Rebuke and lesson to its wiser lord!
There's not a portion of thee but bespeaks
Ransacking of the earth and sea—and all
To recommend thee unto eyes, whose owners,
Be they the homeliest, behold thy betters
In their own mirrors.

SIR VALENTINE.

I will dress to please
The eyes of none but thee.

HERO.

Thou should'st be rich—
Too rich for modest happiness, and all
Beyond is but the name! Riches are bars

Prevent us enter Heaven; how then be doors
On earth to admit us unto aught of Heaven?
How many hundreds brings thy rental in?

SIR VALENTINE.

As many as make up a thousand pounds
To welcome every quarter.

HERO.

Poor young man!
How I do pity thee!

SIR VALENTINE.

I will reduce
My revenue.

HERO.

Can'st thou reduce the wants
Thy revenue hath gender'd—foes to thee
Under the masques of friends?

SIR VALENTINE.

My every want
Is now summ'd up in one.

HERO.

Hast thou a title?
How art thou nam'd?

SIR VALENTINE.

Sir Launcelot de Vere.

HERO.

How would'st thou bear be called plain Launcelot?
Thou would'st not know thyself. We have no titles.
Names, being of themselves no part of us,
We only value as distinguishing
One from another. Stephen, Ephraim,

John, Obadiah, Solomon, suffice.
All adjuncts else, as Misters, Sirs, Earls, Dukes,
We do regard as superfluities.
Sir Valentine de Grey! I neither like
Title nor Christian name. More proper far
Would Peter fit—or Mark, or John, or Luke,
Or Nicodemus—names of men of peace,
And sounding passing sweet.

SIR VALENTINE.

The name is mine
Thou givest me..

HERO.

So thou believest now:
To-morrow, thou wilt be the former man.
Nor must I longer talk with thee; for sweet
I own the proffer of thy duty comes,
Altho' by me received mistrustingly.
Persist not, friend, or I will wholly doubt
What half I would believe;—which, if indeed
Thou mean'st—and, here, the frankness of a maid
Doth overshoot her coyness—thou can'st prove
Hath matter weightier than airy words.
Farewell! What shall I call thee?

SIR VALENTINE.

Launcelot.

HERO.

So soon forgot.

SIR VALENTINE.

Mark, Obadiah, Job,
Peter, or—or—I lack the other names.

HERO.

No matter! These are grateful as the rest,
Nor 'mongst them Peter least! What a sweet name
Is Peter!—I will call thee Peter, tho'
It be for the last time (*sighs*). Farewell, friend Peter.

SIR VALENTINE.

Stay! How may I call thee?

HERO.

Say, Ruth.

SIR VALENTINE.

Farewell,
Fair Ruth!

HERO.

Fair Ruth! So soon forgot again!
Friend Ruth, thou ought'st to say.

SIR VALENTINE.

Friend Ruth, farewell!
And yet another word! Have I thy leave
To come to thee again?

HERO.

That must depend
On how thou com'st.

SIR VALENTINE.

Then sure I come again!
Friend Ruth!

HERO.

Friend Peter?

SIR VALENTINE.

May we not shake hands?

HERO.

That must depend on how thou shakest hands.

SIR VALENTINE.

Why, how should I shake hands?

HERO.

Why, soberly.

SIR VALENTINE.

Then soberly, friend Ruth, shake hands with me.

HERO.

There, that is long enough!

SIR VALENTINE.

One more word yet—
Friend Ruth, may I not kiss thy hand?

HERO.

Friend Peter!

SIR VALENTINE.

I'll kiss it soberly—yea, soberly.
Farewell—once more—farewell!—One more.—It is
A banquet gathers appetite.

Enter CLEVER.

CLEVER.

Young man,
What do'st thou?

SIR VALENTINE.

Nothing.

CLEVER.

Yea, a thing doth vex
The spirit of the maiden, and to mine
Doth give disturbance—yea, a forward thing,
Abomination to the faithful—yea,
Abomination.—Go! [*Placing himself between them.*

SIR VALENTINE.

Farewell!

CLEVER.

Avaunt!
Such things become not eyes like her's or mine
To look upon.—Avoid!

SIR VALENTINE.

Farewell! I'll come
Again.

HERO.

Then come with more discretion, friend.

CLEVER.

Thou hear'st—avoid! Remove thee hence! Begone!
Make not a crook, friend, of thy body—say
Farewell—do nothing more—and go!

SIR VALENTINE.

Farewell!

HERO.

Farewell!

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

The Park.

Enter LORD ATHUNREE *and* FELTON.

LORD ATHUNREE.

I did appoint him to attend me here.
Behoves my door and he be strangers, lest
Our practices be trac'd. Want dogs him still,
And fits him for my purpose, by the threat
Of her pernicious tooth. Yet there 's a weakness,
I would he had not. He doth love a child;
Which shews his nature is not callous all;
Whence do I oft times dread some start of ruth.
But finds he out fair Hero's close retreat,
The meagre knave shall fatten. Soft! he 's here—
Well, have you traced her?

Enter LEWSON.

LEWSON.

Yes; she is at Greenwich,
Where I and mine do live and famish.

LORD ATHUNREE.

Fool!
Not to have guess'd as much, and know she hath
A villa there. Resides she by herself?

LEWSON.

She does.

LORD ATHUNREE.

Then is she mine. Can'st thou obtain
Secret admission?

LEWSON.

Easily, my Lord;
Into her very chamber, which doth open
Into a garden.

LORD ATHUNREE.

It must be done to-night.

LEWSON.

Most strangely is she chang'd.

LORD ATHUNREE.

How?

LEWSON.

In her dress,
That's of the fashion of that formal sect,
Which at all worldly modes exception takes.

LORD ATHUNREE.

Indeed! some plot's on foot, and doth concern
Her quarrel with Sir Valentine. To-night,
She gives me lodging. Stay—we must proceed
With such exactitude, the sun and dial
Shall vary soon as we! I'll write it down. [*Writes.*
'Sdeath! I must change a word! I'll write it o'er

Again, that thou may'st have no scratch to hang
Excuse for failure on. There. Be observant
To the syllable. Away! Thy greatest hire,
For former service, I will double for thee,
Succeed'st thou but in this.

LEWSON.

Misgive not, Sir;
I ne'er before did fail you. But, so please you,
Some present prompt supply. My children starve!
My wife, to find them half a meal a day,
Hath worn herself to skin and bone, and now
Can drag her limbs no more to forage for them.
Their pressing need relieve, and do with me
Whate'er thou wilt.

LORD ATHUNREE.

There!

LEWSON.

All is noted here,
Behoveth me to heed?

LORD ATHUNREE.

No jot forgot.
I may rely upon thee?

LEWSON.

As on one
Whose life is in thy hands. [*Goes out.*

LORD ATHUNREE.

The cards do turn.

FELTON.

I pray you, what intend you?

LORD ATHUNREE.

He obtains
Admittance; I am on the watch, without;

She is alarm'd; I hear her cry for help;
And to her rescue naturally come.
I enter how I can, and once within,
Shape as I may the rest—assured of this,
She will accept protection; giving which,
I cast what colour on the case I will,
Ensuring payment full.

FELTON.

Thou art the prince
Of plotters!

LORD ATHUNREE.

Thou art no less royal there.
So hold we charge of one another's secrets,
Neither is like to break.

Enter EUSTACE *and* WALSINGHAM.

EUSTACE.

Lord Athunree,
I do accuse thee of a murder! and
Do undertake to justify myself,
At the point of the sword. Hast thou the courage to
Abide the trial, whereunto I now
Demand of thee thou fixest time and place,
For thy defence? I do repeat the charge
And challenge too—thou art a murderer!
And I demand thou pay the penalty,
Which if I prove defaulter in exacting,
I am content to leaguer my own life.
For the third time, I charge thee with the deed!
Of felony more capital accuse thee
Than ever caitiff on the scaffold paid
The forfeit of! A murder cowardly!

Unparallel'd! past human nature savage!
Wilt thou confront me? Wilt thou? Can'st thou? Dar'st thou?

LORD ATHUNREE.

Doubt'st thou my answer prompt as thy demand?

EUSTACE.

Give it, and leave not room for question! Where,
And when, shall we the mortal issue try?

LORD ATHUNREE.

To-morrow!—Stay!—that gentleman thy friend?

EUSTACE.

He is.

LORD ATHUNREE.

He passes then as voucher for thee.
Yet I'll prevent miscarriage in the thing
Thy heart so earnestly is bent upon,
To its deep cost, I fear. There! time and place
You see are written down.

[*Writes on the back of the paper he had first written upon.*

EUSTACE.

For this I thank you,
That I may thoroughly be quits with you,
And all the payment on thy side be due.

LORD ATHUNREE.

Farewell! Thou art young, but yet more rash than young!

EUSTACE.

I am not rash, but by reflection act
As I do now, with hope my arm will prove
Staunch as my tongue. Thou art a murderer!

[LORD ATHUNREE *and* FELTON *go out.*

WALSINGHAM.

My fellow-student! Wonder hitherto
Hath tied my tongue! Has he a wrong with thee
To settle too?

EUSTACE.

He has! Let's see what time and place
He hath appointed? Ha! what's here?
Oh, Providence is here! (*Aside.*) A plot to ensnare,
In helpless ruin like to mine, the heart
In girlhood still was nearest to my own.
Then must I see thee, Hero! Pride must now
Give way to love. Occasion calls me hence,
More urgent yet than that which brought me hither.
Nor must we go together. Question not!
But, at our place of practice, give me meeting
An hour at least ere noon.

WALSINGHAM.

I shall not fail. [*Goes out.*

EUSTACE.

Oh, what a case is mine, to wear the brand
I never merited!—to be denounc'd
The child of guilt, that am the daughter free—
Except the primal all-referring lapse—
Of innocence! To be amerc'd of that
The loss of which might make offence a thing
To be commiserated more than blam'd—
For nothing!—So!—Inconstant to him!—So!—
A wanton!—So!—The framer of a lie!—
He loves me still! I pardon all for that!
For that his tongue shall rail at me again—
Pronounce me faithless—liar—wanton—aught!
Aught that I am not, for the blessed AM

That still assures him mine! Oh, I do play
A novel part. A solitary maid,
Herself to vindicate her injur'd name!
No father, brother, friend, to plead the cause
Of her wrong'd honour, and her baffled love!
No champion left her but a woman's arm
Back'd by a woman's heart!—yet, trusting these,
And to just Heaven appealing, resolute
For life or death to meet the mortal strife!—
But where is Hero? Does thy friend forget thee,
And thou in peril? No! She flies to save thee!

[*Goes out.*

SCENE II.

A Room in HERO'S *House at Greenwich.*

Enter HERO.

HERO.

My game the more I play successfully,
The less my eagerness to win it grows.
'Tis all but mine, and thought of victory
Sits at my heart so heavy, for defeat
To turn up now were respite to me! respite!
False gains are poor possessions, bringing not
Content—the touchstone of true happiness!
And yet I punish him! For what? for right?
Retaliation of offended wrong!
Yet did he bear me beyond patience hard.
At once to throw off duty! and my slave

To start up my dictator, that ne'er yet
Met bended brow of man—in presence too
Where vassal homage had awaited me!
He should be made to bow! and, once become
My thorough captive, spurns for spurning take!
Yet doth he raise him, by those lofty thoughts
He breathes of zeal and honor for my sex,
While I do sink as coming short thereof!
With this regard I fail. I must see nought
Except my purpose—by the dread of loss
Yet to enhance my value in his eyes,
Propound my terms, and to the issue come
That shews him foil'd, and me the conqueror!

Enter CLEVER.

CLEVER.

Ma'am, he is come!

HERO.

Then shew him in, and mind
What we arrang'd, touching those friends of mine
I am to summon from the other Room. [CLEVER *goes out.*
How shall I struggle thro' the race, wherein
I gasp at setting out!

Enter CLEVER, *shewing in* SIR VALENTINE.

CLEVER.

Here is the man
That wants to speak with thee—be careful, for
I like his habit better than his looks.
He minds me of some child of Satan, who
My spirit hath offended—watch him, Ruth,
And advertise me if he troubleth thee. [*Goes out.*

HERO.

Thy business, friend?

SIR VALENTINE.

Dost thou not know it?

HERO.

Yea!
If fits thy purpose, friend, thy habit, grave,
And goodly must it be—what is its shape?
Instruction or admonishment, or what?
Unfold thee. Be it righteous and discreet,
I'll hear it as an humble sister ought.

SIR VALENTINE.

Dost thou not know me?

HERO.

Yea! that thou art one
Amongst the faithful—but I know not who
That one may be.

SIR VALENTINE.

Not know me, sister Ruth?

HERO.

Oh! is it you, friend Peter, come again
Into a new man chang'd!

SIR VALENTINE.

So chang'd for thee!
My fortune I've reduced. Made o'er to thee
For purposes of heavenly charity!

HERO.

Made o'er thy fortune? Could I this believe? [*Aside.*

SIR VALENTINE.

My thousands, lady, have since yesterday

To hundreds dwindled, at thy will. If that
Contents thee not, but still I seem too rich,
Say but the word, the hundreds shrink to tens—
The tens to units—these again to nought,
That my fond love may win most rich reward.

HERO.

I dream'd not of such love! [*Aside*

SIR VALENTINE.

My title gone.

HERO.

Thy title gone!

SIR VALENTINE.

Had it been costlier,
More readily it had been thrown away,
As to thy wish, whereto it gave offence,
A meeter sacrifice! Plain gentleman
Is all they rate me now; if that's too high,
I'll be plain yeoman, for thy gentle sake;
If that, low hind! aught lady, aught! to please
The wise desires are guardians to thy love!

HERO.

His title likewise gone! I have o'ershot
My mark! I'll stop!—Too late—I must go on!—
Thy work not yet complete. Our sect, thou know'st,
Prohibits marriage, save amongst its own;
To number thee with whom if thou incliu'st
To recommend thee, it behoves thee win
Some brother's, sister's, word—such are at hand—
Wilt thou submit thee to their scrutiny?

SIR VALENTINE.

At once.

HERO.

But mind, whate'er they do remark,
Thou tak'st in silence—even in good part.
It will be scandal to me else, because
Of entertaining thee.

SIR VALENTINE.

Thy bidding, law. [HERO *rings.*

Enter CLEVER.

CLEVER.

Hath he misdone? Am I to put him forth?

HERO.

No; brother Ephraim I wish to see,
And with him sister Grace.

CLEVER.

They saw the man
Ascend the steps, and when he was let in,
They op'd the door themselves, and vanished!
Thereto advis'd by his forbidding looks.
Friend Ruth, he's poison to thee. Yesterday
I lost much grace accompanying him
From London unto Greenwich, so he vex'd
My spirit by the lightness of his gait,
And mortified me, as he drew the eyes
Of flaunting damsels on him! To reform him
Is hopeless, for the more I did admonish,
The more did he offend; till, scandaliz'd
Beyond endurance e'en of my meek spirit,
I wavered between option to stand still
And let him on alone, or run and leave him.
Observe moreover he's a man of wrath,—

Look at him! He could eat me up—yea, eat me
Like to a ravening lion a poor lamb!
Ne'er judged I looks of man—if inwardly
He does not bite his lips! Be sure he swears!
Yea, he blasphemeth!—Get him from thy doors!
Eject him from them! Into the highway with him!
Heed not if night or day—in sun or rain—
Or lose thy place among the faithful, Ruth!
Umph!

HERO.

See they do reject thee—yea,
They do reject thee!

SIR VALENTINE.

Do not thou the same!
Oh, let me talk to thee in my soul's speech—
List! I have stak'd my life on winning thee!
Not in my own breath, but in thine I live!
My portion in the sun, the earth, and all
The affluence from their copartnery
Deriv'd, I have made o'er to thee, nor now
Except by thy vouchsafing can enjoy!
Am I to live or die? Nay, think before
Thou speak'st, and those fair thoughts to council call,
Yet richer than the sumptuous palace which
They make their proud sojourn! So like to Heaven,
Hast not its ruth that makes us daily bless
Its governance? Thou hast! and as thou hast,
Let it beam down its influence on me,
And save thy worshipper! Thou let'st me kneel—
Sure then—O! sure I do not kneel in vain.

HERO.

Rise up! These proofs of honest passion quite
Confound me.

SIR VALENTINE.

Hear me! O, the world! the world,
That's made up of two hearts! That is the sun
It moves around! There is the verdure! There
The flower! the fruit! The spring and autumn field,
Which in the reaping grows! the mine that, work'd,
Accumulates in riches—ever free
From influences of the changing stars,
Or aught, save that which sits above them higher
Than they above the globe!—Come! make with me
E'en such a heavenly world.

HERO.

Beseech thee, rise!

SIR VALENTINE.

In hope?

HERO.

In hope! What did I say?

SIR VALENTINE.

Thou said'st—
Thou bad'st me rise in hope (*Rises*). Thy heart is mov'd.

HERO.

'Tis touch'd.

SIR VALENTINE.

And nothing more?

HERO.

Perhaps a little.

SIR VALENTINE.

How may I call that little? what's its name—
If haply of the kind I'd have it be,
'Gainst all I've thrown away, and ten times more,
I'd set it—Lady, tell me, what's its name?

Oh, deal magnanimously with me, nor
What 'tis not wrong to feel, when thou dost feel it,
Believe 'tis wrong to speak! Frankly! could'st love me?

HERO.

Frankly, I could.

SIR VALENTINE.

Once more, be frank—and dost thou?

HERO.

Frankly, I do.

SIR VALENTINE.

I said, "once more be frank,"—
Yet must I say once more be frank again.

HERO.

And if thou dost, I will be frank again.

SIR VALENTINE.

Wilt take me for thy husband?

HERO.

There's my hand—
If no impediment forbids thee, clasp it.

SIR VALENTINE.

None.

HERO.

Soft—I'll do 't! 'Twill be a sweet revenge! [*Aside.*
A thought doth strike me. Thou hast lov'd a damsel,
My likeness it should seem—and one know I,
Who to the vision so resembles me,
As doth myself, myself; nor can the ear
That hears us, well determine which is which,
In pitch and tone our voices so are one.
The damsel thou affectedst, may be she—
Her name is Hero Sutton.

SIR VALENTINE.

'Tis the same.

HERO.

Another thought doth strike me. Is the name
Thou gav'st to me, thy real one? Alas!
Thy colour mounteth! It is clear! Thou art
Sir Valentine de Grey? Alas! alas!
Your leave to be alone.

SIR VALENTINE.

Are you not well?

HERO.

Oh, yes; I'm very well. Good e'en! Quite well!
Well as a woman can be when she finds,
Too late, she rashly gave her heart away,
To one, whose value for the gift will be,
Soon as he proves 'tis his, to bid her keep it.

SIR VALENTINE.

To bid her keep it!

HERO.

As Hero Sutton rues!

SIR VALENTINE.

She never gave
Her heart to me.

HERO.

She did! you know not when
A woman gives away her heart! at times
She knows it not herself. Insensibly
It goes from her! She thinks she hath it still—
If she reflects—while smoothly runs the course
Of wooing; but if haply comes a check—
An irrecoverable—final one—
Aghast—forlorn—she stands, to find it lost,
And with it, all the world!

SIR VALENTINE.

No maid could love,
And act as she.

HERO.

How did she act?

SIR VALENTINE.

I told thee.
She danc'd to please a libertine, and pain
A man of honour, who did worship her.

HERO.

She danc'd to please no man but thee. Your eyes,
She thought upon her, did alone inspire her
In the measure. Thorough conquest of the heart,
She thought was all but her's, she hop'd to make;
And so, with all her soul endeavouring,
Did lose it all, and with it all herself!

SIR VALENTINE.

If she had told me this—

HERO.

If she had told!
When? pray thee, where? or how?—did'st name a place,
Or time, to hear her vindicate herself?
Did'st even hint it to her? In a breath,
You doubted, tried, condemn'd, and sentenc'd; nor
'Fore witnesses did'st pity her to spare her!
They should beware, who charges lay in love,
On solid grounds they make them! for, there are hearts
So proudly fond, that, wrong them here, they'll break
Or ever they will stoop to right themselves.
Much such a one is her's; and yet, with all
Her pride—for strong as that, more strong her love—
She trusts to win thee still.

SIR VALENTINE.

She gave me up, without a sigh or word.

HERO.

So had I given thee up, had I been she—
And I do love thee.

SIR VALENTINE.

See me at thy feet.

HERO.

I can't, with thought how thou hast knelt at her's.

SIR VALENTINE.

Nay, hear me, but in pity.

HERO.

She in pity
Did hear thee! Much it profited her!—much!
She now, it seems, may sue!

SIR VALENTINE.

I swear to thee
Eternal constancy!

HERO.

Thy witnesses, thy oaths to her!

SIR VALENTINE.

Where are the smiles just now
Did beam upon me?

HERO.

Quenched by Hero's tears.

SIR VALENTINE.

By Hero's tears! She never wept for me!

HERO.

She show'd thee not her tears; but what of that?
Her eyes might pour, and thou not see a drop.
I know they did so.

SIR VALENTINE.

Let me hold thy hand.

HERO.

Never, till her, thou hast wrong'd, thou offerest
To right. The world return to, thou would'st quit
It seems for me. Resume its habit; hie
To Hero Sutton's, whom I will advise
To look for thee to-morrow eve. Repeat
What I have said to thee. If she denies
What I aver, be free to come to me,
And welcome too! If she acknowledges,
The hand of her, whose heart thou hast purloin'd,
Behoves thee ask and take.

SIR VALENTINE.

Yet hear me.

HERO.

Nay!
These are the terms on which we break or meet.

SIR VALENTINE.

If she rejects me?

HERO.

Then will Ruth be thine.

SIR VALENTINE.

If she accepts me?

HERO.

Then still thine—She dies!

[*They go out severally.*

SCENE III.

An Ante-Room leading into HERO'S *Chamber in the same House.*

Enter LEWSON, *from the Window.*

LEWSON.

Safe! Safe!—all silent! What has turn'd my feet
From flesh to lead? My body, which to bear
Their function is, doth seem to drag them on.
I wont not thus to feel. Ferrying across
From Limehouse now, I sav'd a drowning man.
Twice had he sunk in sight of his young brood,
That with their dam kept fluttering on the shore.
How they did bless me! while the standers by
Did echo them, and to inquirers say,
That ask'd who sav'd him, "Yonder 's the good man!"
And I afoot to do an evil act!
Another should have sav'd him! Let it pass!
Is this her chamber? No, her dressing-room.
Ay, here 's her woman's gear. What holds this case?
Her paint, I'll warrant—her cosmetics—aught
To give another skin; they're ne'er content
With nature's; patches, perfumes, dentifrice!
A book?—I'll wager one she durst not show!
A Bible! Umph! Strange reading that, methinks,
For a fine lady. Here's a leaf turn'd down;
What says the place? It seems to talk to me!
I'll read no further! So—what have we here?
Her letters! Excellent! Her letters!—now
To see how they can look and talk the saint,

And play the sinner still. A hundred pounds,
The first is an amour !—A wretch's prayer
For help—herself and children without food
For two whole days ! What, baggage ! beg ere rob ?
Wait for a thaw, and see thy little ones
Congeal to death i' the icy world !—with the thought
I have a feeling how the tiger's fangs
Rend for her cubs a meal !—What alms did'st hope
Her ladyship would give?—What would suffice
The dressing of her gown she wears a night
And casts aside for foul ! What 's here—is this
Her answer—or the copy on't ? Indeed ?
Ay, when she gives she gives ! She seems to think
That poverty, like plenty, is made up
Of flesh and blood. There 's food for dam and whelps
For a whole week. The letter 's to my wife !
She din'd to-day—fall to 't—fall to 't—thy brood
May gorge them now ! Methinks I see them feed !
Heaven bless her !—What ! Heaven bless her, did I say ?
Then, what do I do here ? No more of this.
I've work to do, chimes not with thoughts like these.
No more on't. Footsteps !—so—beast to thy lair.

[*Conceals himself.*

Enter HERO ; *she goes to the window, and looks out.*

HERO.

Whether mine eye with a new spirit sees,
Or nature is grown lovelier, I know not ;
But ne'er, methinks, was sunset half so sweet !
He 's down, and yet his glory still appears,
Like to the memory of a well-spent life,
That 's golden to the last, and when 'tis o'er,
Shines in the witnesses it leaves behind.

They say, a ruddy sunset a fair day!
Oh! may it be a day without a cloud,
Which of my fate doth see the clearing up;
That I may quote it ever as a sign
Of sincere fortune, often as I say
Was ever day so bright! How calm is all—
How calm am I!—Would every breast I knew
Did lodge a heart as tranquil.—There was one—
A most strange history! Is she alive,
Or dead? (EUSTACE *appears at the window.*) Who's there?

EUSTACE (*entering*).

A friend!

HERO.

Help!

EUSTACE.

Hush! I come
For safety!

HERO.

To thyself?

EUSTACE.

To thee. Look here,—
Lest I should miss thee, I prepar'd this scroll.
More brief 'twill tell my errand, than my tongue
Could do't.

HERO (*reads*).

Lord Athunree!—This very night!
My house beset—myself by force abstracted!

EUSTACE.

If thou hast kindred in the neighbourhood,
Or friend thou can'st rely upon, forthwith
Of thy immediate danger caution them
By hands you can confide in—for my pains,
I pray you pay me with the only audience
Of some poor moments, when I'll take my leave.

HERO (*to herself*).

I need not fear him! On his o'ercast brow
'Tis grief, not guilt, that lowers.—A minute's patience,
I shall rejoin you. [*Goes out.*

EUSTACE.

Thou art happy, Hero,
And she that loves thee, weeps—but not that thou
Art happy. Thy fair fortune is the likeness
Of what was once my own! It is a face
Reminds me of a valued friend that 's gone,
And which I bless, the while it makes me weep!

HERO (*re-entering*).

What you advis'd, I've done—and now your pleasure?

EUSTACE.

Have I your leave, I'll sit. I've used some haste—
Am somewhat out of breath—I thank you! So!
Pray you be seated, too. You've had your share
Of friends?—Your 'haviour of the winning kind,
That goodness sweetens!—you are frank—you love
Another's weal more than you envy it—
And such a one makes friends.—'Mongst those you've found
You surely some do miss, else was your fate
Past earthly blessing happy?

HERO.

I've lost friends.

EUSTACE.

By—death?

HERO.

By death.

EUSTACE.

And any by misfortune?

HERO.

Misfortune!—No, not any.

EUSTACE (*rising*).

What!—not one?
Good night!

HERO.

What mean you? Do you take me for
A season friend, no stauncher than the bird
The sun doth tell his time to come and go,
And's with us when 'tis summer?—O, you wrong me!
What!—I to love, as doth that summer bird
The land he makes his gay sojourning in,
My friend, because 'tis leaf and blossom time!
Indeed you wrong me!—Knew I at this moment
A cheek I lov'd, was beggar'd of its smiles—
Not one left to it—I swear to thee the next—
If back'd my power my will—before the next,
My own should be its neighbour.—Oh! how much
You wrong me!

EUSTACE.

Glad I am I've done thee wrong—
In sooth, I am—and yet I wrong'd thee not,
I only miss'd thy meaning! Had'st not a friend
Misfortune lost thee?—not that thou shunn'dst her,
But that her heavy and most strange affliction
To thee and all her sex forbad her access?

HERO.

A friend? a sister! What a fate was her's!
Of all I valued, she the being was
I least could measure worth with. Of all grace,
The pattern was she—person, features, mind,
Heart, every thing, as nature had essay'd
To frame a work which none might find a flaw in!
And yet 'tis said, she fell—and if she did,
Let none be sure they'll stand! She couldn't fall!

There's such a thing as purity on earth,
And if she fell, there could be no such thing!
She didn't fall!—no! no!—I knew her, or
I never knew myself! Virtue with her
Was not a lesson we must con before
'Tis learn'd by heart; it was a portion of her,
Much as her stature, feature, limb or shape,
Which, saving nature's, hand did never give.
She has been outrag'd, slandered—aught—but lost!
She could not fall—she did not—could not fall!
What ails thee?

EUSTACE.

He that sets a banquet down
To famish'd lips, serves poison and not meat,
For, ten to one, the greedy guest doth die.
Yet doth he bless the host, as I bless thee,
That spread'st for me this feast!

HERO.

This feast! What feast?
Move not thy lips thus impotently, or
I'll think thou diest indeed! What feast do'st mean?
Is't one the heart makes? 'Tis—thine eyes do talk
Language 'twould tax a hundred tongues to speak!
In wonder's name, who art thou? Say thou'rt not
What thou dost seem, I'll thee tell who thou art!
Could I not do't?—Could I not?—Helen?—What?
Well? Am I right? If ever thou did'st lodge
A treasure in this breast, ne'er fear to claim it!
'Tis safe—whole—whole—demand it—take it—come—
'Tis thine as e'er it was!—Well?

EUSTACE (*speaking as* HELEN).

Hero!

HERO.

Nay,
I'll bring it to thee, then! That's right—weep on!
My sweet! my dear! my poor! my wrong'd one—yes,
Wrong'd—wrong'd—I say't again! Thou need'st not speak,
Thou hast not strength—thou'lt sleep with me to-night?—
To-morrow for thy story.

HELEN.

Nay, to-night.
I'm more myself again!—Let it be so—
Sit down awhile. How hast thou been, my Hero?

HERO.

Well, sweet, most well.

HELEN.

Now by the love
Thou bear'st me, interrupt me not, but hear
My story out. Thou hast been told, that from
A roof which shelters aught but innocence,
In company with one, whom innocence
That would be safe should shun, i' the face of day,
Thy friend was seen to issue. Thither by
A forged tale of misery alone
She was decoyed—exposed to outrage there—
Rescued by him—by him conducted thence,
Met in the street ere well her foot had left
The threshold—countenance refused her tale
By him that sole could vouch its truth—by *him*
Her tale discredited, whose credence was
Life! happiness! all but honour! In a word,
Her virtue blasted, that had ne'er known blight—
Denounced as canker'd—rotten—that was sound
As thy own, Hero—ay, as thy own!

HERO.

I know't.

HELEN.

You know't? Alas, you know it not—you think it—
Think it in the teeth of damning fact. It is
Your love—your charity. An alms—an alms—
Is all that friend so kind as even thou,
Can render now to me—yet, I'll be righted!
But fare-thee-well—'tis late!

HERO.

You'll stay with me?

HELEN.

What! let me press thy pure sheets, Hero, with
A tainted name? How I have wrong'd thee!—wouldst
Believe't? I once came to thy door—but there
I stopp'd. I was not wont to ask for leave
To enter it, and I must ask for't now!
I left thy door again—the certainty
To see it never ope' thy friend preferr'd
To but the chance to see it shut upon her.

HERO.

To but the chance to see it shut upon thee!
What warrant ever gave I for such chance?
Oh! had it wider, free'r ope'd than e'er,
It only had anticipated what
Its mistress' arms had done—what now they do!
You shall not leave—nay, in sooth you shall not!

HELEN.

In this attire, think, should I here be seen—

HERO.

I'll think of nought, but that thou here art now,
But that thou here shalt stay. Thou canst be gone
At dawn. Thou know'st a thousand things I have

To ask of thee—how we shall meet again—
Where I shall find thee—what thy projects are—
Deny me not, I pray thee! 'Twill but make
The greater beggar of me—Come! you can,
You must—you will—this is my chamber—come!

[*They go out.*

LEWSON. (*Entering in disorder.*)

I cannot do't! Heaven's on the watch against it!
'Tis said it guards the good, and if it does,
Its spirits sure are here—they are!—or why
This fearful awe come over me? I feel
As eyes were on me, that I cannot see—
Above me lips that speak but are unheard—
And hands that have a thousand thousand times
The power of flesh and blood, yet lack the bulk
Of air! Heaven will not have it be—it sets
Before mine eyes, the fruit of what I've done—
To warn me back from what I've come to do.
That hapless maiden owes her injur'd name
To me! I was the instrument to ruin her!
To fix on her the wanton's brand, that ne'er
In thought it seems did know the wanton's stain.
To damn in this world, what i' the next is blest!
Oh! heavy sin—Go, sin no more! How's this?
Go, sin no more! So said the book to me.
Then Heaven doth care for sinners, it should seem!
A blessed book! I'll go and sin no more!
The chime! It lacks a quarter of an hour,
The very clock doth watch me. Was't the hour,
They'd have me in their fearful toils again!
Away! away! speed feet, while ye are free,
Softly and swift—the minutes fly! away! [*Exit.*

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

HERO'S *Town House.*

Enter SIR WILLIAM SUTTON *and* EMILY.

SIR WILLIAM.

What? Helen Mowbray come to life again?

EMILY.

'Tis even so; and metamorphos'd as
You ne'er would dream. But pray you, use despatch.
On the reverse of this she gave your niece,
And which unthinkingly no doubt was given
To her, 'tis clear some mortal work 's on hand—
For here are time, and place, and weapon nam'd,
Upon the part of base Lord Athunree.
There yet is time! Prevent it, while you may!

SIR WILLIAM (*rings the bell*).

Hark, Sir! Take charge of this, and have it straight
Put into execution by the chief
O' the city officers—look to it well!
And now, what means this full assembly call'd
Of friends and relatives, to feast with Hero?

EMILY.

I must not tell—but guess.

SIR WILLIAM.

I cannot guess
The shapes particular of women's fancies,
Especially in one of Hero's vein.
Retains she her disguise?

EMILY.

No; casts it off—
And with it, habit more a part of her.
She is chang'd beyond belief.

SIR WILLIAM.

Not my belief,
When I do see it.

EMILY.

I must hie to her,
And set her mind at rest on this affair,
Touching her friend, which chance reveal'd to her,
In time, I trust, the issue to prevent.
You have given order they be hither brought?

SIR WILLIAM.

I have. Where's Hero?

EMILY.

In the library,
In earnest converse still with that strange man,
Who prayed an audience with her, and, I think,
Brought news that has surpris'd her. Dinner time
Will see an end, and clearing up of all.

[*They go out severally.*

SCENE II.

The outskirts of LONDON.

Enter WALSINGHAM *and* HELEN (*still in the disguise of* EUSTACE.)

WALSINGHAM.

Not yet arriv'd!

HELEN.

'Tis 'fore the time.

WALSINGHAM.

How feel you?

HELEN.

Collected, and myself.

WALSINGHAM.

You look so. Clear
Your 'haviour, as this day of trial only
The ordinary mate of yesterday,
You'll win!

HELEN.

I shall!—I am resolv'd to win.

WALSINGHAM.

Shew me thy sword.

HELEN.

I cannot draw it, but
My life must follow.

WALSINGHAM.

How?

HELEN.

It is my heart—
This which I wear, is nothing. Call it steel,

'Tis steel!—a straw, it even is a straw!
Its stamina not lodging in itself,
But in the use that's made on't.

WALSINGHAM.

This is calm,
Upon the eve of combat.

HELEN.

Walsingham,
There is a kind of nature that clears up
The instant it confronts a trying thing.
In common evils, hesitates and fears;
In ills of moment, shows sedate resolve.

WALSINGHAM.

Why, that is woman's proper contradiction.

HELEN.

It passes for 't; but sometimes 'bides in man,
Not therein less of his high caste deserving,
Tho' so resembling woman! Think'st not so?

WALSINGHAM.

Assuredly.

HELEN.

You see this mood is mine,
Nor was I on my guard to let it out—
'Twill lose me credit with you. Best have pass'd
For Sir Redoubtable any day o' the year!
You more had thought of me.

WALSINGHAM.

No!

HELEN.

You say I am calm?
I am so—that is, as to the issue of
This mortal meeting—for 'tis mortal!—but
I have a trouble, and—wilt thou believe me?

'Tis touching thee!—It grieves me, Walsingham,
To leave thee an abused man behind me!
What thou didst tell me I have ponder'd well,
And thereon founded arguments, methinks,
More solid than I urg'd on you before.
They are here—your poor friend's legacy to you!
[*Gives a paper.*
Stop!—you're about to speak—don't speak as yet.
If I should fall, you pledge your gentle word,
My body you will have direct convey'd
Unto the lady's I have herein nam'd,
[*Gives another paper.*
Deliver'd to her custody—her own?
Nor until then, one fast'ning, fold, loop, thread
O' the vesture, thou wilt suffer be disturb'd—
No, not to search, or probe, or staunch a wound,
Or settle if indeed alive or dead,
Or any thing! To this, thou pledgest thee?

WALSINGHAM.

Dear boy, I do!

HELEN.

Another thing—

WALSINGHAM.

What is 't?
Thou pausest, as in doubt I'll grant it thee.
Whate'er it be, I'll swear to do it.

HELEN.

Ha!
Then thou dost set my heart indeed at rest!
Mind, thou hast sworn to do 't. Revenge me not!
That comprehendeth all! Don't speak again,
Till I have done, quite done. Thou lovest me?

WALSINGHAM.

I do.

HELEN.

How much?

WALSINGHAM.

As never man before!

HELEN.

Speak not of love gone by, but present love.
With those thou lovest now, how rates thy love?

WALSINGHAM.

As first!

HELEN.

As first of all?

WALSINGHAM.

Of all!

HELEN.

All friends?
Not one before me?

WALSINGHAM.

No!

HELEN.

Not one?

WALSINGHAM.

Not one.

HELEN.

And all love told?

WALSINGHAM.

All love, but love itself.

HELEN.

Shake hands!—We'll say good bye before they come,
Lest there arrive occasion, and no time!
Good bye!—Oh, happy women, that are friends!
They may embrace—men cannot do so.

WALSINGHAM.

Yes,
When they are brothers.

HELEN.

Feel'st thou as my brother?
I feel as I were thine.

WALSINGHAM.

My boy! my boy! [*Embracing* HELEN.
Heaven!—but thou faint'st!

HELEN.

No!—Are they coming?—Heaven
Reward thee, for thy precious love of me!
They are at hand—Good bye!

WALSINGHAM.

Show me thy sword!
'Tis somewhat longer, I believe, than mine,
And I would try the depth of yonder stream,
In case we need to wade it.
[*Goes out, and returns without the sword.*
It has slipp'd,
And gone down to the bottom!—Boy, your quarrel's mine:
To humour thee, did I consent to play
The second to thee. Stand aside, with broad
And lusty breast and sinewy arm, and see
Thy stripling form the deadly point oppose
In the athletic villain's practis'd hand,
Instead of grasping thee with loving force,
Like to a doting father his boy-son,
Or elder brother his dear younger one,
Taking thy place, and swinging thee away!
No, boy! Before thy young veins part a drop
Of their life's streams, my channel shall run dry!

HELEN.

Is this fair, Walsingham?

WALSINGHAM.

Yet, hear me on!

I find I could not live without thee; so
Guarding thy life, I but protect my own.
That's fair—that's rational—that's sound in nature!
Want'st further reason?—I will give it thee—
Thou art like her!

HELEN.

Whom?

WALSINGHAM.

Boy, hast thou read my soul—
Have I turn'd o'er its every page to thee—
Love, hate, hope, doubt, possession, loss, bliss, pain,
Contentment, and despair—and in each one
Shown thee one all-pervading cause enwrit,
For nothing? Whom could I compare thee to,
But her—the heroine of my sad story?
Whom much thou dost resemble! Hast thou never
Remark'd me gazing in abstraction on thee,
As tho', upon perusal of thy face,
While seem'd mine eye intent, my soul did pore
Upon some other thing?—I have done it oft—
Will do it once again! Your eyes are her's,
In form and hue, but sunk; a darkness too,
Not heavy, yet enough to make a cloud,
Sits—not disparagingly tho'—'neath thine;
Her's were two starry brilliants, set in pearl!
The outline of the nose is quite the same,
But that of thine is sharper—'tis thy sex.
The mouth is very like—oh, very like!
But there's a touch—a somewhat deep one too—
Of pensiveness. The cast of her's was sweetness,
Enlocking full content. The cheek is not
At all alike!—'tis high; and lank below;
And sallow—not a dimple in't—all contrast

To the rich flower'd and velvet lawn of her's.
But tho' thou art not she entire—thou art
Enough of her, to make me love thee, boy!
With such a brother-love, as brother never,
I dare be bound, for brother felt before!
I spoke not of thy hair—it is a wood
Run wild compar'd to her's, and thrice as deep
I' the shade—Yet, you are very like her!—quite
Enough, to make me pour my heart's blood out,
As water, for thy sake!—They are at hand!

HELEN.

Then let me be at least thy sword-bearer;
And when thou need'st the steel, I'll keep the sheath
Which in thy motions would embarrass thee.

WALSINGHAM.

Take it, and thank thee!

Enter LORD ATHUNREE *and* FELTON.

LORD ATHUNREE.

We are late for you, Sirs;
But not, I think, for time.

WALSINGHAM.

You are in time.

HELEN.

Draw off, till, with his second, I arrange
Preliminaries—which I know are wont,
In questions of this kind. What we decide,
I will possess you of; and then proceed.
Sir, let us speak. You know me, principal.
My place, my second would perforce usurp.
Permit him not, as you're a gentleman!
You see he is unarm'd—your rapier draw,
When I draw this, and force him stand aloof.
You promise this?

FELTON.

I do! (*Aside.*) It keeps the odds
Upon our side!

HELEN (*drawing*).

Lord Athunree, I am ready!

FELTON (*drawing, and opposing* WALSINGHAM).

Stand back, Sir! at your peril!

WALSINGHAM.

Ha!—the boy
Has baffled, and out-witted me! [*Advances.*

FELTON.

Stand back!
I bar all interruption to the game
We are summon'd here to play.

WALSINGHAM.

A coward act,
To draw upon a naked man!

FELTON.

My lord!
Why draw you not, and he his weapon out?
Proceed, my lord, at once.

LORD. ATHUNREE.

Before I do,
I ask, and I must learn, in name of whom
The urchin has arraign'd, and challeng'd me.
I fight not, till I know upon what cause.

HELEN.

The cause of Helen Mowbray!

WALSINGHAM.

Drop your hand,
And let me pass!—or sure as that's a sword,
My heart is on your point!

LORD ATHUNREE.

Spite of thyself,
Another minute grant I thee to live.
I will not draw, until I know thy name.

HELEN.

Mowbray!

LORD ATHUNREE.

Her brother?

HELEN.

Any thing you please,
Caitiff without a parallel in crime!

WALSINGHAM.

A brother!—Hold! Lord Athunree! Look, Sir,
A moment give I thee, to take thy choice
'Twixt murdering me, or suffering to pass!
Heaven! do I care for life!

[*Rushes upon* FELTON, *and wrests the sword from him. At the same moment, Officers and Servants enter.*

FIRST OFFICER.

Hold! Stop!—Proceed
At your peril! you are all our prisoners, Sirs;
Sir William Sutton's warrant makes you so,
Which here I show to you. Surrender, then,
And to his niece's bear us company.

[*They all go out.* WALSINGHAM *and* HELEN *last, who stop a little behind the rest.*

WALSINGHAM.

Thou half hast kill'd me, boy! How could'st thou do so!
Or keep from one, who lov'd thee as I do,
A secret like to this? Her brother—so!
Her brother!—I shall love thee better still—
And better yet—and yet not half so well!

[*They follow.*

SCENE III.

The Street.

Enter SIR VALENTINE.

SIR VALENTINE.

Spite of my failing heart, thus far I've come
With love to urge me, love to waive me back.
My duty tender'd, fortune made or lost—
Not tender'd, absolutely lost—no chance
Permitted me to win! 'Tis Hero's form
With the fair essence—match for thing so fair—
To Hero's form without! It is a whole,
Past calculation rich, against a part,
And that the poorest—yet consummate rich.
And I must play for both, or neither win!
Or winning one, the other quite forego!
It cannot be she loves me! Hero love me!
A prideful pleasure kindles at the thought—
But comes the gentle Ruth, and puts it out
With genial brightness of bland nature, as
The sun a little fire. O sun most fair,
I richer were ne'er to have known thy light
Than knowing it to lose it. Ne'er did man
Draw lots with chances more oppos'd than mine.
A little moment I am made or lost,
Lost past retrieving—past addition made!
Then must I, like a desperate gamester, on!
Throw fear of loss aside—tho' loss of all—
And think of nothing but the chance of gain
That makes me rich for life!—past affluence!

[*Goes out.*

SCENE LAST.

A Room in HERO'S *House.*

SIR WILLIAM SUTTON *seated in the centre*—WALSINGHAM, HELEN, LORD ATHUNREE, FELTON, OFFICERS, *&c.*

SIR WILLIAM.

Lord Athunree, charg'd with intent thou stand'st
To break the peace of our right sovereign lord
The king. What answer'st thou, or dost refuse
To plead?—Is this thy hand?—Wilt answer that?
Whose'er it is, it is a villain's, lord!
For the same writer that arrang'd a fray
Did plan a felony—in danger put
A lady's jewelry, so rich to her—
Not all the caskets of the proudest line
Of noble dames, pour'd out into one heap,
Could make a blaze to match it!

LORD ATHUNREE (*aside*).

Curse my haste
For such remissness, on the back to write
Of the instructions first I pencill'd down
To give the caitiff wretch—whose guess'd miscarriage
Is now accounted for!

SIR WILLIAM.

Lord Athunree,
How say you?

LORD ATHUNREE.

For the combat you have marr'd,
My silence or denial naught avails.

You found me in the act. The challenger
You need to seek elsewhere.—I am not he.

WALSINGHAM.

Sir William, he says right.—He challeng'd not,
But he such provocation gave, as makes
The challenger more the challeng'd.—He did stain
A lady's credit, bringing it to naught,
Or causing it to pass for nothing more;
Which tresspass capital her brother here,
In form a stripling, but in mind a man,
Indeed demanded reparation for,
Which to exact, my arm assay'd, but fail'd—
For I had woo'd, and won, and, as I thought,
Alone engag'd the maid. Sir William, try,
If from that sacred seat of justice, voice
Of solemn adjuration can avail
To bring the truth to light—first, if the maid
Did fall indeed—the knowledge he thereof
Alone possessing—

SIR WILLIAM.

No, Sir; not alone!—
The maid did never fall!

WALSINGHAM.

Did never fall?
O, ponder what you say!—Not rashly—O,
Not rashly raise a wretch from the abyss
Into the light, to cast him in again
On darkness heaving darkness! Now I faint
With the day-flood that seems to burst upon me!
I say, "that seems," for such transition mocks
The doting of belief!—or heard I right?
Or knew'st thou what thou saidst? or, knowing it,
Knew'st thou didst speak on grounds of solid footing,

Something akin to rock?—It should be rock
Itself, to bear the fabric thou dost raise
Against the sea of doubts that surges on it!
O, did she never fall? Did love itself
Take sides with hate to do her hateful wrong?
To blast her—to abandon her—and leave
A prey to haggard fortune—death or madness?

SIR WILLIAM.

Collect thyself, and further audience lend,
Or bid me hold my tongue. The maiden lives.

WALSINGHAM.

Lives? Lives? Is innocent, perhaps, and loves!
O does she?

SIR WILLIAM.

Yes.

WALSINGHAM.

Thou seem'st to know what makes
My all, or naught of being! Innocent,
And lives and loves?

LORD ATHUNREE.

First prove her innocent.

SIR WILLIAM.

He cannot! what of that?—Another can!

LORD ATHUNREE.

Produce that other.

[SIR WILLIAM *beckons*—LEWSON *enters.*

LEWSON.

Here he is.

LORD ATHUNREE.

Betrayed!

WALSINGHAM.

He hath confess'd—take notice all! The lips
That blurr'd fair Helen's name hath ope'd themselves,
To damn themselves, and do the maiden right!

SIR WILLIAM.

No need confession from that riven wretch!
To that abhorred house thou saw'st her quit,
A letter, as from one she knew and lov'd,
In mortal strait entic'd her. There, assailed
With show of violence from this same man,
That lord premeditated succour brought her,
The whole his foul contrivance! You may leave!
You are known!—What penalty the law awards
For such default, be sure shall be exacted!

LORD ATHUNREE.

I do defy you—scorn you! Do your worst! [*Goes out.*

[HELEN *swooning, is caught by* WALSINGHAM.

SIR WILLIAM.

Look to thy mistress, Walsingham.

WALSINGHAM.

Where is she?—
I nothing see except this fainting boy,
Whom help me to restore.

SIR WILLIAM.

To wake him up,
Breathe in his ear the name thou lovest most!
Throw back those ebon clusters thoroughly,
And consciousness will start upon thee straight,
Thou never dream'dst of, and thou shalt confess
That love, howe'er it hath a jealous eye,
Hath not a piercing one.

WALSINGHAM.

Herself!—my own!
My sweet!—my idolis'd!—my innocent
Helen!—her eye-lids quiver—Helen! Helen!

They ope! Dost thou not know me, love? O Heaven,
Die not away again! My soul's true life!
Helen—my gentle one! My patient one!
My faithful one, unwarp'd by rudest strain!
My loving one!—More loving—yes, I say it
That love thee best—more loving yet than lov'd!
Look at me! Answer me! This semblance but
Of death, is death itself to me! 'Tis I—
'Tis Walsingham!—'Tis I—repentingly,
Humbly, imploring thee to speak to him,
To look upon him—pity him!—forgive him!

HELEN.

I love thee, Walsingham. Have all thou ask'st
In that one little word!

[*They retire.* SIR VALENTINE *enters.*

SIR WILLIAM.

Sir Valentine!

SIR VALENTINE.

The same, Sir William Sutton.

SIR WILLIAM.

You are welcome.

SIR VALENTINE.

In strait where things like life and death depend,
Suspense is but the rack—I'll know my fate!
Sir William Sutton, I am come to crave
An audience of your niece.

SIR WILLIAM.

Apprise my niece
Sir Valentine de Grey would speak with her.

SIR VALENTINE.

At thought of sight of that proud form again,

Old motions in me stir—but only stir.
Come other thoughts—they are at once at rest!

[HERO *enters, most magnificently attired.*

O what a tower of grace and loveliness,
And stateliness, and absolute command,
She bursts upon mine eyes! Were't tenanted
As I would have it!

HERO.

Well, Sir Valentine!
Your will?

SIR VALENTINE.

I come a promise to redeem,
Thou'lt think most strange, as I do, that did make it.
A suit I have, the gain or loss of which
Depends on thee, although to thee not pleaded!
Shall I be pardon'd, who, against my will,
Past sufferance presume?

HERO.

Not mine! Say on.

SIR VALENTINE.

It is the voice of Ruth! I wonder not
At that—but breathing Ruth's benignity!

HERO.

Shall I *entreat* thee say thy wish?

SIR VALENTINE.

More bland
The accents yet! Can Ruth have told me right,
And does she love me?

HERO.

It doth pain me, Sir,
To mark such hesitation, when, to have,

You only have to ask; and, asking, do
A pleasure—giving leave to pleasure you.

SIR VALENTINE (*aside*).

No strain hath love, if this of other mood.
I win her, and am lost! O gain to lose!

SIR WILLIAM.

My niece awaits your question.

HERO.

Uncle, peace.
Give him his time—the measure on't his will!
To look for pleasure is itself a pleasure.
But half they feast who to a feast sit down
The moment it is named. Say, that he wait
An hour, why then, so much I banquet more,
And yet fall to with relish.

SIR VALENTINE.

O such words
To fall from Hero's lips a month before!
Come certainty, whate'er along with it!
Dost thou affect me?

HERO.

Yes, Sir Valentine.

SIR VALENTINE.

Wilt take me for thy husband?

HERO.

Yes, again.

SIR VALENTINE.

Good bye, sweet Ruth!

HERO.

Strange welcome this!

SIR VALENTINE.

Good bye
To sweet content of modest happiness!
Lady, my title's gone!

HERO.

For that receive
More hearty welcome than thou gav'st to me.

SIR VALENTINE.

My fortune dwindled.

HERO.

As it sinks you rise.
For that receive more hearty welcome yet.

SIR VALENTINE.

My tastes are altered.

HERO.

Tell me what their kind,
They shall be mine—whate'er thy taste, rank, state,
My state, my rank, my tastes, shall be the same!

SIR VALENTINE.

Then must we wed.—O for that plumed tiar,
The simple hood!—that costly lace, the coif
Close pinn'd and modest clear!—that gorgeous dress,
The gown embroider'd with humility!

HERO.

They are donn'd at thy command, and these cast off.

SIR VALENTINE.

And canst thou, too, the vesture of the mind
That made thee cherish these, cast off?

HERO.

I can!
Hard things which love cannot for love perform.

SIR VALENTINE.

Such bounty should enrich.—Alas! for me,
Who, spite of all its granting, must be poor.

CLEVER (*entering*).

Friend Ruth, the dinner waits.—Friend Peter here!
And to the world, like thee, gone back again!
Then change of gear for me! Bold serving man,
Who would be other than his betters are!
No more, friend Obadiah—know me hence
For Master Clever, name and nature one!

SIR VALENTINE.

Have I but dreamt 'tis night, and is it day!
A masque is it I have been acting in,
And known it not? Can'st thou be both, yet one?
Is Ruth but Hero—Hero even Ruth?
Then welcome Hero for the sake of Ruth,
And Ruth more welcome yet for Hero's sake!
And is it so?—or does the fable end
In cold return to dull reality?

HERO.

No; in reality that's born of it
And is its fairer likeness!—real grown
What first was only seeming. I have become
The part, I lately play'd; the thing I was
Before, have ceas'd to be! Such virtue hath
The only show of virtue! For which change
Thy noble nature do I thank, altho'
Perhaps with more than prudent jealousy
Exacting; and precipitate, where patience
Might well have counsell'd pause. With Hero's form
Take Ruth's contentment and humility—
Their dress, whate'er your love would have it be!

But here is one unchang'd, nor needing change, [*To* HELEN.
Except where seeming goes for next to naught!
My Helen! thou art happy now!

HELEN.

I am!

WALSINGHAM.

And I, that scarce deserve my happiness!
But what shall make me misbeliever hence?
How could I doubt thee! Strong appearances
By stronger vouchers back'd, it was, that made me,
But that detected now—and these explain'd—
Thy virtue rises like a pyramid
I wonder aught could hide!—A life of trust
Shall for a season of misgiving pay thee!
Yet more I have to say—of that anon—
For guests are here you thought not of before,
On whom your feast that waits for us depends—
Marr'd, if disrelish'd,—made, if they're content!

THE END.

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